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On Increasing the Persuasiveness of a Low Prestige Communicator[1]

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It has often been demonstrated that subjects will assume that a high prestige communicator is a more expert and honest person than is a low prestige communicator. Consequently, a high prestige communicator is usually assumed to be more effective in convincing others of any opinion he advocates than is a low prestige communicator. In this paper we proposed that the abstract credibility of a communicator is not the sole determinant of potential effectiveness. We proposed that any communicator, regardless of his prestige, will be more effective and will be seen as more credible when he is arguing for a position *opposed* to his own best interest, than when arguing for changes obviously in his own best interest. (Thus, in some cases, a low prestige source could be extremely effective—in fact, even more effective than a high prestige communicator.) Two experiments were conducted. Both experiments supported the above hypothesis.

Over 2,000 years ago, Aristotle wrote: "Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others . . ." (1954, p. 25). Indeed, one of the most consistent findings in contemporary social psychology is that the prestige or credibility of the communicator is a major determinant of the effectiveness of a communication. All other things being equal, the higher the credibility of the

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communicator, the greater the opinion change of the audience. Credibility has been defined as expertness and trustworthiness (Hovland, Janis, and Kelley, 1953). The definitive example of research in this area is the classic study by Hovland and Weiss (1951) in which it was found that a communication arguing the feasibility of atomic submarines was much more effective when attributed to J. Robert Oppenheimer (whom the audience had previously rated as high in credibility) than when attributed to Pravda (which the audience had previously rated as low in credibility).

Although this result is clear and unequivocal, there are some data which indicate that defining credibility in terms of general expertness and trustworthiness may be somewhat misleading. Indeed, these data can be found in another portion of the same experiment. One of the communications utilized by Hovland and Weiss discussed the possibility that there would be a decrease in the number of movie theaters, as a result of inroads made by television. In one condition, the investigators attributed the communication to *Fortune* magazine (previously rated as high in credibility); in the other, they attributed it to a female gossip columnist (previously rated low in credibility). On this issue, with these communicators, there was no significant difference in opinion change; actually, there was a small difference favoring the low credibility source.

To speculate on the reasons for the insignificant data is a precarious occupation. Nonetheless, it can sometimes be rewarding. One possibility is that the credibility of the communicator may not be simply a function of his abstract characteristics but, rather, may be dependent upon an interaction between his characteristics and the nature of the communication. In the above example, the gossip columnist, although generally untrustworthy, may have been far more effective than *Fortune* magazine when she was arguing that the movie industry was rapidly declining. In this situation, she was arguing against her own best interests. This could have raised her effectiveness in this specific instance tremendously, in spite of the fact that she was rated as untrustworthy in the abstract. In effect, since the members of the audience were aware that if her thesis was correct (and if her communication was effective) it would be to her own disadvantage, they were likely to take her very seriously and to change their opinions accordingly.[2]

[2] In the Hovland-Weiss experiment each source argued both sides of the issue. Unfortunately, the data were not presented separately for each side. Our reasoning suggests that the gossip columnist was far less effective than *Fortune* when arguing that the movie industry was *not* declining and far *more* effective when arguing that the movie industry was declining.

Hovland and Mandell (1952) proposed that suspicion concerning a communicator's motives would decrease the communicator's effectiveness. This hypothesis was not supported.

It is the purpose of this experiment to investigate the possibility in a systematic manner by manipulating the abstract prestige of the communicator and whether the position he advocates would help or hurt him. *Our hypothesis is that a communicator, regardless of his general prestige, will be more effective and will be seen as more credible, when arguing for a position opposed to his own best interest, than when arguing for changes obviously in his own interest.*

Previous experiments concerning communicator effectiveness have usually been conducted in the following way: The same communication is sometimes attributed to a high prestige source, sometimes to a low prestige source. Often the arguments seem irrelevant to the self interests of both communicators; occasionally the arguments seem in each communicator's own interest. In the above cases, the high prestige source is almost always shown to be more effective than the low prestige source.

However, it is also possible to design a communication which will be perceived as a very selfish proposal when attributed to one source, and a very altruistic proposal when attributed to another source. If we were to utilize a communication of this type, we would expect somewhat different results. We would expect that the more selfish a communicator's proposal appeared to be, the more his effectiveness and credibility would decline. The more clearly opposed to his own selfish interests a communicator's proposal appeared to be, the more his effectiveness and credibility would increase.

Thus, if a high prestige communicator was shown arguing against his own interests, while the low prestige communicator was shown arguing for selfish interests, we would predict that the high prestige source would be even more effective, and the low prestige source would be even less effective, than they would be if their proposals were irrelevant to their own interests. If, on the other hand, a low prestige source was shown advocating a position opposed to his own interests, while the high prestige source was shown advocating a selfish position, the low prestige source should be much more effective and the high prestige source much less effective than they would be if their proposals were irrelevant to their own interests. In the latter instance, then, we would predict that a low prestige communicator could be even *more* effective than a high prestige communicator. A communicator's effectiveness and credibility should depend both on his abstract credibility and on the unselfishness of his appeal.

EXPERIMENT 1

Procedure

Subjects were 140 junior high-school students from Central High School in Dickinson, North Dakota.[3] The experimenter[4] ran subjects in groups of approximately 30.

To provide a rationale for the study, the experimenter claimed to be an educational psychologist concerned with improving the high-school "Problems in Democracy" course. She explained that she wanted to find out how students felt about certain topics which would be included in a revised "Problems" course, and how they reacted to certain materials that were being considered for use in the revised course.

She then explained that the issue they would consider first was how much power the courts should have. She explained, "We've found that many people feel the courts have too much power, and that the innocent defendant has hardly any chance of getting a fair deal. On the other hand, there are many people who believe that the courts have hardly any power at all, and that most real criminals never get the punishment they deserve." After providing this background information, the experimenter reiterated that she was interested in the students' own opinions.

The experimenter then passed out a booklet to each student. The booklets appeared to be identical, but in fact contained different material in different orders. The booklet the subject received randomly assigned him to one of six conditions.

In the four experimental conditions, the first page of the questionnaire contained a page from a newspaper. Embedded on this page was a news interview, in which either a low prestige or a high prestige source argued either that the courts should have more power or that the courts should have less power.

When the source was a low prestige one, the news story began: "Joe 'The Shoulder' Napolitano, serving the third year of his twenty-year sentence for smuggling and peddling dope, said today. . . ." When the source was a high prestige one, the news story began: "G. William Stephens, the New York prosecutor who has sent more criminals to prison than any other prosecutor, said today. . . ."

If the interview that followed was one arguing that the courts should have *more power,* the introductory sentence continued: "The courts nowadays need a lot more power if they're going to keep crime under control." The source then stressed the following arguments: (1) That a criminal can almost always "beat the rap" if he has a smart lawyer. (2) Even if the criminal did get convicted, sentences were so "soft" that criminals weren't deterred. (In fact, the criminal simply became a smarter criminal during his brief stay in prison.) (3) The crime rate was rising and would continue to do so until the courts got more power and were allowed to give stiffer sentences.

If the interview that followed was one arguing that the courts should have *less power,* the introductory sentence continued: "The courts nowadays have too much power." The source then stressed the following arguments: (1) At present, innocent men with badly trained lawyers are often convicted. Only a smart lawyer can prevent his client from being framed and can insure his getting a "fair deal." (2) When

[3] We appreciate the help of Dr. Alem Hagen, Superintendent of Schools; Cecil Risser, Principal; and Margaret Dehne, Guidance Counselor, for their help in conducting this study

[4] Darcy Abrahams and Zita Brown served as experimenters.

innocent people go to prison, they come out "as tough as any real convict." Further, long sentences for men who are guilty of crime produce smarter criminals, rather than rehabilitated men.

It was expected that the subjects would perceive that the criminal has a vested interest in convincing others that the courts should have much less power. Similarly, they should perceive that a prosecutor has a vested interest in convincing others that the courts need more power.

Agreement with the communication. To assess subjects' acceptance of the communication and reactions to the communicator, their attitudes were assessed on pages two and three of the booklet. The questions were introduced to subjects with a reminder that they had just finished reading a news story by either the criminal or the prosecutor who had given his opinion about how much power the courts have today, and about how people on trial for various offenses should be treated.

Questions one and two were designed to measure general agreement with the communication. Question one asked subjects to express their own personal opinions about how much power the courts should have. A scale was provided which ran from (1) "The courts have too much power" to (5) "The courts have too little power." Question two asked whether or not we should adopt the source's suggestions. Questions three through five asked the subjects about their agreement with specific points discussed in only one or the other of the two communications (e.g., whether prison sentences should be longer or shorter, how often an innocent person is convicted of a crime, and finally, how often a guilty person is set free).

Evaluation of the source. Subjects were then asked their opinions concerning the source's credibility. They were told that though they might not know very much about the source, they should try to make a good guess about some of his characteristics. The three questions designed to measure the subjects' evaluations of the communicator's credibility were: (1) How much of an expert about how the courts should be set up do you think ..... is? The scale ran from (0) "Not at all expert" to (15) "Very expert." (2) How honest do you think his statements are? Once again the scale ranged from (0) "Extremely dishonest" to (15) "Extremely honest." And (3) How much would you be inclined to be influenced by what he said? (0) indicated "Influenced not at all," and (15) indicated "Influenced greatly."

Manipulation check. A final question asked subjects to indicate what the source's position had been on the issue of how much power the courts should have. Possible answers ranged from (1) "The courts have too much power" to (5) "The courts need much more power." This question gave us some indication of whether or not subjects understood our communications.

Control conditions. In the control conditions, subjects answered the attitude questions *before* reading the newspaper article.

Control subjects' booklets began with exactly the same introduction that experimental subjects were given, except that the introduction was changed to say that they *would be* reading an article by either the criminal or the prosecutor, instead of reminding them that they had just read such an article. Then they were asked to answer the five attitude questions.

After answering these questions, control subjects were asked to indicate how credible the source *would be*. Then they evaluated the source's expertness, honesty, and influence. The wording of the final question (which had asked experimental subjects to indicate what the source's opinion had been) was also changed slightly. Control group subjects were asked to guess what the source's opinion would be. For experimental subjects, this question was a manipulation check to determine

whether or not they had understood the communication. For the control subjects, this served another purpose; it tested our assumption that the criminal would be assumed to have a vested interest in advocating less court power, while the prosecutor would be assumed to have a vested interest in advocating more court power.

Results and Discussion

We expected that a communicator, regardless of his prestige, would be more effective and more credible when he was advocating ideas opposed to his own interests than when he was advocating ideas to his own benefit. We thus expected that the communicator and the communication would interact in determining the effectiveness of a communication and the credibility of a communicator.

Manipulation check. In evaluating the support or lack of support provided for the hypothesis by this experiment, it is first necessary to check on two things: (1) That subjects correctly perceived the source's message, regardless of whether or not it seemed to be the kind of thing they would expect him to say; (2) that control subjects do in fact assume that a criminal would advocate weaker courts and that a prosecutor would advocate stronger courts. The data strongly support both these assumptions. The messages in the different communication conditions were perceived to be significantly different ($F = 332.04$, 1 and 134 *df*, $p < .001$). More importantly, the source to which the message was attributed clearly does *not* affect perception of the content (Interaction $F = .34$). In addition, control subjects who expect to read an interview with the criminal guess that he will argue for weak courts; control subjects who expect to read an interview with the prosecutor expect that he will argue for strong courts. These differences are significant at $p < .01$. ($F = 17.89$, 1 and 42 *df*).

We can now turn to our prediction: that a communicator will gain in effectiveness and credibility as his arguments become increasingly opposed to his own selfish interests.

Question one asked subjects how much power the courts should have. We calculated how effective a communicator was in the following way: Subjects in the conditions in which the source advocated *more* power were scored plus if they indicated that they believed in more court power than did the average control subject,[5] and minus if they indicated that they

[5] The Control Group mean was calculated by averaging the responses of those 22 subjects who were told they would soon be reading a communication by Joe "The Shoulder" Napolitano with the responses of those 22 subjects who believed they would soon be reading a communication by Prosecutor Stephens. There were some differences in subjects' answers when they expected to read one or the other communication. Though these differences were not significant, it did not seem legitimate to use two different "base rates" when calculating the changes demonstrated by

believed in less court power than did the average control subject. Subjects in the conditions in which the source advocated *less* power were scored plus if they advocated less court power than did control subjects, and minus if they advocated more power than did control subjects. A plus, thus, indicates greater agreement with the communication than that expressed by control subjects. A minus indicates less agreement with the communication than that expressed by control subjects. How much agreement or disagreement existed was measured by recording the difference from the opinion expressed by the average control subject. Over-all, the messages appear to be effective ones. There is more agreement with the communication by those subjects who have heard the message than by those who have not. ($F = 8.12$, 1 and 134 df, $p < .01$).

When we examine the resulting effectiveness scores of subjects in various source-communication conditions, we see that our hypothesis is supported. Source and content interact in determining communication effectiveness (see Table 1 and Figure 1) as we predicted they would (interaction $F = 6.30$, 1 and 134 df, $p < .05$). From an examination of Fig. 1, however, it is clear that this difference is due almost entirely to the fact that the criminal is much less effective than the prosecutor when both are arguing that the courts have too much power, and *slightly more* effective than the prosecutor when both are arguing that the courts need more power. It seems that when the criminal's proposals are against his own best interests, and the prosecutor's proposals are selfish, the criminal is just as effective as the prosecutor; however, he does not become *more* effective than the prosecutor. (Over-all the prosecutor appears to be somewhat more effective than the criminal, though not significantly so. $F = 3.72$, 1 and 134 df, N.S.)

Question two asked subjects whether or not the suggestions of the communicator should be adopted. Once again we expected the content of the source's communication to affect his persuasiveness. Though on question two the interaction between the source and communication was not significant ($F = 1.83$, 1 and 92 df), the same tendency we noted in question one is apparent. The criminal is much less effective than the prosecutor in promoting his cause when both are arguing for less court power; he is almost exactly as effective as the prosecutor when both are arguing for more court power. Because of the specific nature of the interactions in questions one and two, there is some ambiguity in their interpretation. On the one hand, the significant interaction indicates that our

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experimental subjects in various conditions, so the answers of all 44 subjects were averaged together. The average control subject ($M = 3.14$) believed "The courts have just the right amount of power."

TABLE 1

SUBJECTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ISSUE AND THE COMMUNICATOR (EXP. 1)

		Advocating less court power		Advocating more court power		No communication	
		Criminal	Prosecutor[a]	Criminal[a]	Prosecutor	Criminal	Prosecutor
Effectiveness of the source							
How much power should the courts have?[b]	$\bar{M}$	−.09	+.70	+.56	+.53		
Should we take the source's suggestions?[c]	$\bar{M}$	2.38	2.83	2.78	2.84		
Prestige attributed to the source[d]							
How expert was he?	$\bar{M}$	5.59	12.36	8.31	11.98	6.16	11.24
How honest was he?	$\bar{M}$	9.34	10.57	8.87	9.83	7.88	10.64
How influential was he?	$\bar{M}$	6.10	8.70	7.17	7.62	5.34	7.69
Manipulation check							
What was (or will be) the source's position?[e]	$\bar{M}$	1.00	1.33	4.70	4.80	1.41	3.09
	(N)	(24)	(24)	(23)	(25)	(22)	(22)

[a] The communicator is advocating a position opposed to his own best interests.

[b] The more positive the number, the more effective the communicator has been.

[c] The higher the number, the more the subject thinks we should take the communicator's suggestions.

[d] The higher the number, the more expertness, honesty, and influence the subject attributes to the communicator.

[e] The higher the number, the more convinced the subject is that the source advocated, or will advocate, more court power.

hypothesis has been supported, that any communicator's credibility depends in part on the self-interestedness of his communication. On the other hand, it is possible that the prosecutor is equally effective regardless of what he says, while the criminal can gain effectiveness only by arguing against his own best interests.

Questions three through five are not very helpful in attempting to understand our data and to differentiate between the two preceding alternatives. First, information relevant to answering these three questions appeared in only one or the other of the two communications.

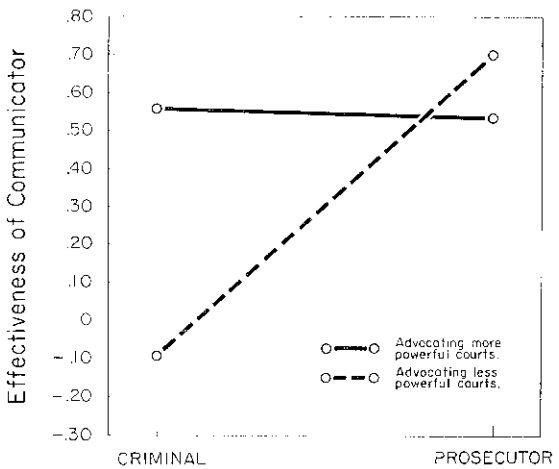

FIG. 1. Effectiveness of communicators when advocating stronger or weaker courts (Exp. I).

Second, the arguments appear to have been so confusing (or ineffective) that they made no impact on the high-school students. For two of the three questions, there was no more agreement with the message when students had heard it than when they had not.

Measures of the credibility of the source. We had two expectations concerning credibility of the source: (1) Control subjects did not know what the source would say. We expected that control subjects would assume that the "high prestige" prosecutor's arguments would be more credible than the "low prestige" criminal's would. (2) We expected that the credibility of both sources would be greater when they were advocating changes clearly opposed to their own selfish interests than when they were advocating selfish changes. Thus, once again, we expected the communicator and the communication to interact in determining the source's credibility.

Both the above predictions were supported by the data. Three questions tapped the credibility of the communicator: "How expert was .....?" "How trustworthy was .....?" and "How much did ..... influence your opinion?" Subjects' answers to these three questions were summed to form an index of credibility. On this credibility index, the *control* subjects rated the prosecutor significantly higher than the criminal ($F = 35.14$, $p < .001$). In addition, the prosecutor was rated as more credible on each of the questions making up the index. Control subjects assumed that the prosecutor would be more expert ($F = 55.52$), $p < .001$), more honest ($F = 12.51$, $p < .001$), and more of an influence ($F = 10.12$, $p < .01$) than the criminal. (The *df* for all *F*s are 1 and 42.)

Secondly, as we predicted, whether the communication was in the communicator's own best interests or opposed to his selfish interests did significantly effect the experimental subjects' own perceptions of the source's credibility. On the credibility index, the interaction is significant at $p < .05$ ($F = 5.59$). In addition, when considered separately, two of the three items making up the index were influenced by whether or not the communication seemed to be in the source's own interest. Arguments opposed to the source's own best interests increased the *expertness* attributed to the source (Interaction $F = 9.66$, $p < .01$) and the extent to which subjects felt they were influenced by him ($F = 3.58$, $p < .10$). The attribution of "honesty" to the source was not influenced by the selfishness of his message, however ($F < .07$). (*df* for all *F*s are 1 and 92.)

We conducted a second experiment in order to secure some additional information about Exp. 1. In Experiment 1, we secured the significant interaction that we had predicted between source and communication; this would seem to indicate that an altruistic message would increase a communicator's credibility and effectiveness, while a selfish message would reduce his effectiveness. However, this significant interaction was produced in the following way: The criminal was much less effective than the prosecutor when both advocated weaker courts, and only slightly more effective than the prosecutor when both advocated stronger courts.

Two questions concerning these data immediately occurred to us.

First, were our findings due simply to a peculiarity in one of our communications? The fact that the criminal was much less effective than the prosecutor when both were advocating weaker courts might simply be a demonstration that a high prestige source is more effective than a low prestige one; a finding often demonstrated before. However, why wasn't the prosecutor more effective than the criminal when both were advocating more court power? It is conceivable that this lack of differ-

ence might have been due merely to a peculiarity of the particular communication advocating more court power. For example, perhaps people are more familiar with the arguments for strong courts than with the arguments for weaker ones; the arguments we provided for stronger courts might have been simply an effective (or ineffective) repetition of previous arguments, moving all subjects to well-conditioned agreement. The communication for stronger courts may have provided no new arguments ambiguous or controversial enough so that prosecutor and criminal could have a differential effect. This alternative explanation for our finding seems to be a rather tortuously contrived one, but, nonetheless, it would appear essential to demonstrate that the results were not merely a function of the differential familiarity of the opposing communications. One way of avoiding such problems was to design communications concerning a judicial system less familiar to subjects than the American one. For this reason, in Exp. 2 we wrote communications concerning the judicial system in *Portugal*.

A second possible explanation for the data we secured also occurred to us. In Exp. 1, the subjects themselves had to realize, upon reading the "selfish" communications, that the source had a vested interest in advocating such a position. It is obvious why a criminal would want to promote weak courts; it is perhaps somewhat less obvious why a prosecutor has a selfish interest in promoting strong courts. Perhaps the criminal seemed to lose effectiveness more rapidly than did the prosecutor when both argued selfishly, simply because it was more obvious that the criminal was being selfish. We wondered if we would have strengthened the effect (and produced a stronger interaction) if we had pointed out the source's vested interests to subjects. In order to answer this second question, we added a set of conditions to Exp. 2 in which the vested interests of one of the sources—the prosecutor—were pointed out to subjects. Thus, Experiment 2 utilizes a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ design (communicator $\times$ communication $\times$ salience of the prosecutor's vested interests).

EXPERIMENT 2

Procedure

Subjects were 233 seventh-grade students from Wayzata Junior High School.[6] They were run in homeroom classes of approximately 25. Once again the experimenter[7] introduced the experiment by claiming to be an educational psychologist

[6] We would like to thank Mr. Harold E. Doepke, Principal, Wayzata Junior High School, and Mrs. Val Solouskoy and Mr. Richard Cargill, teachers at Wayzata Junior High School, for their cooperation in conducting the study.

[7] Jenny Hoffman Rajput, David Landy, Frank Rosekrans, and Elaine Walster served as experimenters.

interested in developing an improved civics course. The experimenter said she was interested in finding out how much junior high-school students knew about the court systems in foreign lands. She told subjects she would give them a booklet containing information about their attitudes toward the legal system in France, Japan, Portugal, or Finland. (In fact, all booklets discussed the court system in Portugal.) She said these booklets would contain (1) some information about the legal system in a specified country, (2) some initial questions asking the subjects about their attitudes toward the court system in a specified foreign country, (3) a translation of a recent news story, and (4) a few questions about subjects' reactions toward the news story. In fact, the "initial questions" constituted a pre-measure, the "news story" was a persuasive communication, and "the few questions about their reactions" was a post-measure of attitude.

Regular introduction. In four conditions, an introductory sheet briefly described the legal system in Portugal as being much like that in the United States:

> In the Portuguese provinces, arrests are made by local policemen. Sometimes the local prosecutor is also the local policeman. Cases are tried in a local court. The local prosecutor argues for the state (this means that he tries to get the jury to convict the defendant). A lawyer defends the accused (this means he tries to get the jury to free the defendant). This is the same procedure we follow in America.

Prosecutor's ulterior motives made salient. We speculated earlier that perhaps the selfish interests of the prosecutor were not so obvious as the selfish interests of the criminal. We also wondered whether or not a selfish or altruistic communication would have more of an effect on the communicator's effectiveness and credibility, if subjects were more aware of the prosecutor's vested interests. To answer this question, four additional groups, in which a prosecutor's vested interests were explicitly pointed out, were run.

Subjects in these conditions had two paragraphs added to the introductory sheet provided to regular subjects. These paragraphs read as follows:

> In Portugal the salary of the prosecutor is entirely determined by how many convictions he secures. If the jury frees the accused, the prosecutor receives no money for his efforts. If the jury convicts the accused, the prosecutor *is* paid. The longer the sentence the accused receives, the more money the prosecutor earns.
>
> People in favor of this system say it is especially good because it encourages prosecutors to build strong cases and to go after the biggest and most dangerous criminals. People *not* in favor of this system say it is bad because it makes a prosecutor want to convict people whether or not he believes they are guilty. They say that a prosecutor might want to put an innocent man in jail just so he can earn the money he needs to live.

In these conditions, we thought that the possible advantage to a prosecutor of according prosecutors greater power would be perfectly obvious.

Premeasure. In all eight conditions, the next page informed subjects that they would soon be reading a translation of a newspaper article from *La Prensa,* said to be a daily newspaper in Bilbao, Portugal. The article was said to deal with the question, "How much power should the local police and prosecutors have?" It was explained that the article was taken from a recent issue in which *La Prensa* had

interviewed 200 people—shopkeepers, prosecutors, criminals, housewives, and laborers—about their opinions on this topic.

Before beginning the article, however, subjects were asked to express their present opinions on some of the issues the article would discuss. We knew, of course, that seventh-grade students were not going to know very much, or have very definite opinions, about the legal system in Portugal. Subjects were told that we understood this, and that they should just make the best guess they could. Initial opinions, therefore, are probably more indicative of scale-marking tendencies than of real opinions.

The following pretest questions were designed to measure whether subjects thought Portuguese prosecutors should have more power, less power, or the same amount of power they have now: (a) "How much power should a prosecutor in Portugal have?" Alternatives ranged from (1) "He already has much too much power" to (7) "He needs much more power." (b) "How long should prison sentences be?" (c) "Does Portugal need some more rules to limit the way a prosecutor can go about getting evidence?" (d) "Should it be made easier to convict a criminal than it is now?"

(The pretest attitudes of subjects in various conditions are comparable: For example, the posttest interaction F which we are predicting equals .01 at this time.)

Persuasive communications. In the next section the subjects were assigned to read *one* of four news interviews that had been prepared. In these interviews either a low prestige source or a high prestige source argued either that Portuguese prosecutors should have *more* power or that Portuguese prosecutors should have *less* power.

If the source was a low prestige one, the interviewer began: "Silvestre 'Bad Man' Riberio is now serving the third year of a 20-year sentence for smuggling and peddling dope. He said today. . . ."

If the source was a high prestige one, the interview began: "Antonio Martins Caetano is the Portuguese prosecutor who has sent more men to prison than any other prosecutor. Compared to most prosecutors, he is a very rich man. He said today. . . ."

In one-half of the conditions, the interview which followed was one which argued that Portuguese prosecutors and police should have *more* power. In this interview the communicator argued that the crime rate is rising because it is presently almost impossible to convict criminals. First, rules too severely limited where, how, and when a prosecutor could gather evidence. In addition, regardless of evidence, a lawyer could always get his client off because of the numerous loopholes in Portuguese laws. Finally, prison sentences were presently so short that they did not serve as much of a deterrent. Suggested remedies: (1) Do not worry so much about the rights of the accused. Make it easier for the prosecutor to get evidence. (2) Do not demand so much evidence in convicting a man. The communicator indicated that the prosecutor would not bring him to trial unless he was convinced the man was guilty. (3) Give longer sentences. Make criminals fear committing crimes.

In one-half of the conditions, the interview contained arguments that Portuguese prosecutors and police should have *less* power. The communicator argued that it was too easy at present to convict an honest man. The communicator then explained why this was so: First, he said, there were too few rules about when, where, and how a prosecutor could search through a man's belongings. Presently, it was extremely easy to plant evidence against a suspect. The communicator claimed that the prosecutor in the next province had told him that 20% of the men now in

prison were innocent of the crimes of which they had been convicted. In addition, the communicator argued that prison sentences were so exorbitantly long that men had no chance of being rehabilitated but were turned into hardened criminals instead. The communicator advocated three changes: (1) Stricter rules to make prosecutors gather evidence in a fair way. (2) Make it harder to convict a person. (3) Finally, make prison terms much shorter.

In summary, then, one-half of the booklets contained a news story in which the communicator was advocating a position of benefit to himself (e.g., a criminal arguing that local prosecutors should have less power; a prosecutor arguing that local prosecutors should have more power). The remainder of the booklets contained news stories in which the communicator was advocating a position obviously directly *opposed* to his own best interests (a criminal arguing that local prosecutors should have *more* power; a prosecutor arguing that local prosecutors should have less power).

Posttest. After the subject finished reading the news story, he was asked to complete some questions concerning his final attitude toward whether Portuguese prosecutors should have more or less power, and concerning his attitude toward how credible the communicator seemed to be.

The first questions assessed the *effectiveness* of the communications. Question one and questions three through five were identical to the questions described in the pretest. They were changed slightly in form, but the question and choice alternatives remained the same. In addition, a question asking "Do you think we should adopt the suggestions that were made in the interview?" was also included. Possible alternatives ranged from (1) "We definitely should not" to (4) "We definitely should."

An index of change was computed by summing together changes from the pretest measure to the posttest measure on all four questions included in both the pretests and the posttests. A plus indicates a change in the direction advocated by the communication; the larger the positive number, the stronger the attitude change that has occurred. A minus indicates a change in a direction opposite to that advocated by the communication.

In the final section, subjects were asked to rate the *credibility* of the communicator. Question (1) asked "How much of an expert is Mr. Riberio [the criminal]?" (or "Mr. Caetano [the prosecutor]?") (2) asked "How honest do you think his statements are?" (3) asked "How much would you be inclined to be influenced by what he said?"

The last question was a manipulation check, designed to see if subjects had correctly understood a given communication. It asked "Which of these opinions did Mr. Riberio [or "Mr. Caetano"] have?" Alternatives ranging from "Prosecutors have too much power" to "Prosecutors need much more power" were provided.

Results and Discussion

We turn to the test of our initial hypothesis: that regardless of his prestige, a communicator will gain in effectiveness when he advocates a position opposed to his own best interests and will lose in effectiveness when he advocates a selfish position.

Figure 2, and Tables 2 and 3, indicate that the effectiveness of the communicator does depend on whether or not his proposed reforms ap-

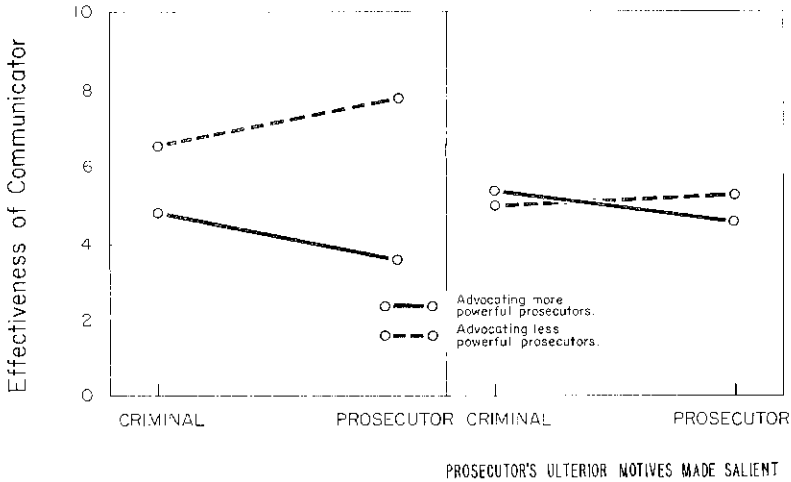

FIG. 2. Effectiveness of communicators when advocating more or less power for prosecutors.

TABLE 2

SUBJECTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ISSUES AND THE COMMUNICATOR (EXP. 2)

		Advocating less power for prosecutors		Advocating more power for prosecutors	
		Criminal	Prosecutor[a]	Criminal[a]	Prosecutor
Effectiveness of the communication[b]					
How much power should prosecutors have?	$\bar{M}$	1.89	2.15	2.24	1.45
Total opinion change on all questions.	$\bar{M}$	6.54	7.74	4.79	3.62
Prestige of the source[c]					
How expert was he?	$\bar{M}$	9.67	11.76	11.32	11.32
How honest was he?	$\bar{M}$	10.77	11.58	11.17	10.24
How influential was he?	$\bar{M}$	9.19	10.11	9.54	8.55
Manipulation check[d]					
What was the source's opinion?	$\bar{M}$	1.21	1.30	4.66	4.52

[a] The communicator is advocating a position opposed to his own best interests.

[b] The higher the number, the more effective the communicator has been.

[c] The higher the number, the more expertness, honesty, and influence the subject attributes to the communicator.

[d] The higher the number, the more convinced the subject is that the source advocated more power.

TABLE 3

SUBJECTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD THE ISSUES AND THE COMMUNICATOR
(Experiment 2: Conditions in which Prosecutor's Vested Interests were Made Salient)

		Advocating less power for prosecutors		Advocating more power for prosecutors	
		Criminal	Prosecutor[a]	Criminal[a]	Prosecutor
Effectiveness of the communication[b]					
How much power should prosecutors have?	$\bar{M}$	.93	1.61	2.26	1.90
Total opinion change on all questions.		4.93	5.25	5.39	4.61
Prestige of the source[c]					
How expert was he?	$\bar{M}$	10.24	11.89	11.19	11.03
How honest was he?	$\bar{M}$	9.30	12.04	11.58	10.34
How influential was he?	$\bar{M}$	7.86	10.74	10.22	9.57
Manipulation check[d]					
What was the source's opinion?	$\bar{M}$	1.27	1.18	4.39	4.68

[a] The communicator is advocating a position opposed to his own best interests.

[b] The higher the number, the more effective the communicator has been.

[c] The higher the number, the more expertness, honesty, and influence the subject attributes to the communicator.

[d] The higher the number, the more convinced the subject is that the source advocated more power.

pear to be in his best interests. When the prosecutor advocated less power for prosecutors, he was much more effective than was a criminal advocating the same position. However, when the criminal insisted that prosecutors should have more power, he was much more effective than a prosecutor advocating the same position. The Interaction F is significant at $p = .05$ ($F = 3.82$, 1 and 225 df). When we look at the four questions which are summed to form the effectiveness index, however, we see that the significant interaction F is produced almost entirely by subjects' answers to the first, and most general, question: "How much power should prosecutors have?" (The Interaction F for this question = 7.30, 1 and 225 df, $p < .01$.) Questions two through four asked about subjects' agreement with quite specific aspects of the communication (e.g., how long prison sentences should be, whether new rules to limit prosecutors were needed, and whether it should be made easier to convict criminals). Though subjects tended to answer these questions as we predicted they would, the Interaction Fs for questions two, three, and four are clearly not significant. (Interaction Fs = .84, .07, and .62, respectively. In all cases the df are 1 and 225.)

In this experiment, the communicator's effectiveness seems *totally* determined by whether or not his communication is in his own self-interest. The prosecutor was *not* more effective over-all than was the criminal ($F = .08$, 1 and 225 *df*).

We turn next to examining the differences which exist between our regular experimental conditions and the four conditions in which we pointed out to subjects the possible self-interest a prosecutor could have in arguing for stronger courts.

In Exp. 1, we noticed that the content of the criminal's speech seemed to have much more of an impact on his effectiveness than the content of the prosecutor's speech had on his effectiveness. There were many possible reasons for this difference. One such reason was that the prosecutor's ulterior motives in advocating stronger courts were not so obvious as were the criminal's ulterior motives in advocating weaker courts. We speculated that perhaps, if the ulterior motives of the prosecutor had been made more salient, source and content would have interacted even more strongly in determining communicator effectiveness than they did.

In Exp. 2 (Table 3), however, it is clear that even when his ulterior motives were not pointed out the prosecutor lost effectiveness just as rapidly as did the criminal when he advocated reforms in his own behalf.

We can still ask, nevertheless, if the interaction between source and communication is stronger when the ulterior motives of the prosecutor are stressed. The data indicate that it is not. The relevant statistic to test the above proposition is the F measuring whether or not there is a three-way interaction between source, content, and the salience of ulterior motives in determining communication effectiveness. This interaction is *not* significant ($F = .53$, 1 and 225 *df*). Thus, the warning that the prosecutor had ulterior motives did not increase subjects' tendency to reject his communication more when his communication was a selfish one and accept his communication more when it was opposed to his own self-interest. It appears that subjects were just as skeptical when they had to perceive the prosecutor's possible ulterior motives themselves, as they were when the instructions specifically mentioned them.

Credibility of communicator. We also predicted that a source would be adjudged as more credible when he was advocating reforms opposed to his own interests than when advocating reforms in his own best interest. Once again, this hypothesis was strongly supported by the data.

An index of credibility was computed by summing together subjects' ratings of how expert, how honest, and how influential the communicator was. From Tables 2 and 3, it is clear that regardless of his abstract prestige, the source became most credible when he advocated reforms opposed to his own best interests and least credible when he advocated

reforms in his own interest. ($F = 15.67$, 1 and 225 df, $p < .001$.) In addition, when we look at the three questions comprising the index individually, we see that, regardless of his prestige, when the communicator advocated changes opposed to his own self-interest he was perceived as more expert, more honest, and more influential than when he advocated changes in his own self-interest. ($F = 3.79$, 25.50 and 10.54, respectively. In all cases the df are 1 and 225.) The communicator's abstract credibility did *not* significantly affect subjects' evaluation of his expertness, honesty, or influence.

Finally, we would like to see if pointing out the prosecutor's possible ulterior motives increased the interaction of source and communication in determining subjects' estimation of the communicator's credibility. It is apparent that pointing out the prosecutor's ulterior motives had no effect. The three-way interaction F is insignificant ($F = .87$, 1 and 225 df).

The results of Exp. 2 offer strong support for our hypothesis. When arguing against his own self-interest, a communicator who would normally be considered to have low prestige can be extremely effective—in fact, even more effective than a high prestige communicator presenting the same argument.

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