

A TEST OF ROKEACH'S BELIEF CONGRUENCE THEORY OF PREJUDICE

ALLEN L. TAN AND GRACE DE VERA
University of the Philippines

A test of the belief congruence theory of prejudice was conducted using only two levels of belief and two levels of race with primacy (or sequencing) controlled. Six measures were used as dependent variables: evaluative semantic differential scales, behavior differentials in each of Triandis' first four factors which he arrived at from his factor analysis of the components of social attitudes, and a total of all the behavior differential scales. Results support Triandis and Davis' contention that while belief was more important in nonintimate behaviors, race was more an important factor where intimate behaviors are concerned.

There exist, at present, two well-known theories of prejudice: the "authoritarian personality" theory of Adorno, *et al.* (1950) and Rokeach's belief congruence theory (1960). Psychoanalytic in orientation, Adorno, *et al.* proposed that children subjected to harsh, arbitrary, parental authority tend to develop hostility which is too dangerous to express towards the frustrating, but feared, parents. This hostility is then displaced towards out-groups, usually of lower status, and forms the basis of prejudice. Rokeach (1960) alternatively proposed that prejudice is expressed against a person not because of the person's identification with an ethnic or racial group, but rather because the person holds beliefs, or is perceived to hold beliefs, that are dissimilar to the prejudiced person's beliefs.

Empirical researches done on the belief congruence theory have been previously reviewed by Bulatao (1967). Presenting pairs of the stimulus individuals described only in terms of race and of belief on one of the eight possible issues, Rokeach (1960) found that in all cases, belief congruence was a more important factor than race in determining the friendship ratings of the subjects. Byrne and Wong (1962), Stein, Hardyck and Smith (1965), and Smith, Williams and Willis (1967), among others, have tended

to support the belief congruence theory. Triandis (1961), however, proposed that prejudice may be multidimensional, and that in cases where large degrees of social distance are involved, (e.g., having someone for a neighbor), race may be more important than belief. Triandis and Davis (1965) showed that belief congruence was more important than race only insofar as nonintimate behaviors are concerned. In the case of intimate behaviors, race proved to be the more important factor. Further, in cases of intermediate intimacy, race and belief were equally important.

In Philippine setting, Bulatao (1967)¹ carried out a test of the belief congruence theory in intimate and less intimate behavior. He presented stimulus individuals described in terms of ethnicity and belief on one of ten issues to 80 subjects who were asked to make friendship and marriage ratings. He found that on all ten issues, with both friendship and marriage ratings, belief congruence was a more significant factor than ethnicity, contrary to Triandis and Davis.

The present study was intended to reconcile these discrepant findings. Previous literature

¹ Bulatao's thesis may not be generally accessible. It is, however, summarized in a recent survey of the literature on anti-Sinoism in the Philippines (Tan, 1968).

yields to two pertinent observations. First, studies which support the theory generally included more issues along which belief congruence was manipulated; e.g., eight issues for Rokeach and ten issues for Bulatao. On the other hand, in studies wherein belief was manipulated over only one issue (e.g., Triandis, 1961, 1964), race generally had a more significant effect. Second, previous studies used non-fictitious persons as stimulus objects (e.g., Negroes). The possibility exists that in rating such non-fictitious persons, race/ethnicity and belief may have been confounded by some extraneous variables. When asked to rate a Filipino who believes in Communism, for example, a subject may first picture the individual as a non-conformist, and react to him as a non-conformist *per se*, and not as he was described.

These observations led the writers to conduct a study which essentially differs from the previous ones in two ways: (1) only two levels of race and two levels of belief were manipulated; and (2) a fictitious group was introduced whereby race and belief could be manipulated without their interacting with extraneous variables.

METHOD

Subjects

One hundred and twelve introductory psychology students from the University of the Philippines were used as subjects. They were equally divided among eight conditions. The eight conditions resulted from a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial design.

Procedures

Subjects were given a brief description of a fictitious group, the Bonpares. The description of the group varied over two factors: race and belief. In terms of race, half of the subjects were told that the Bonpares were light-skinned Caucasians while the other half were told that they were dark-skinned Negroes. In terms of belief, half of the subjects were told that the Bonpares were believers in God; the other half were told that the Bonpares were non-believers. Further, in order to avoid primacy or sequencing effects, half the subjects were presented the racial description first while the other half were presented the belief description first.

The use of "light-skinned Caucasians" and "dark-skinned Negroes" as levels of race, and belief in God and non-belief in God as levels of belief factor require some justification. With regards to race, stereotype

studies in the Philippines (Willis, 1966) have shown that the words "Negro" and "White" as stimuli could elicit greater differences in responses than most, if not all, other possible pairs of stimuli words. With regards to belief in God, Bulatao (1967) found that among 10 controversial issues, belief in God was by far held to be the most important issue among his university students who served as subjects. It was also on this issue that he found belief to have the strongest effect, explaining as much as 60% of the variance. In this study therefore, we were attributing characteristics to the Bonpares that could maximally produce race and belief effects respectively.

Subjects were asked to rate the Bonpares as described to them along 8 semantic differential scales and 12 behavior differential scales. The eight semantic differential bipolar scales were chosen mainly for their consistently high loadings on the evaluative dimension in cross-cultural studies of the semantic differential. These scales were scored along a seven-point continuum from 1 at the unfavorable end to 7 at the favorable end. Scores on the eight scales were then summed and the sums served as a measure of the subjects attitudes towards the Bonpares.

The 12 behavioral differential scales consisted of three items from each of Triandis' (1964) first four factors in his factor analysis of the behavior components of social attitudes. These factors were: (1) formal social acceptance with subordination versus rejection with superordination, (2) marital acceptance versus rejection, (3) friendship acceptance versus rejection, and (4) hostile acceptance versus social distance. Three items among those with the highest loadings in each of the four factors were selected for inclusion in the 12 scales used to measure the subjects' attitude toward the Bonpares. These scales were scored along a nine-point continuum from 1 at the unfavorable end to 9 at the favorable end. For each subject, the three scores under each of the four factors were tallied separately and later, a grand total was obtained by summing over 12 scales.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Six analyses of variance were performed on the data: one with the semantic differential scales as the dependent variable, four with behavior differential scales on each of the four factors as dependent variables, and one with the total of all 12 behavioral differential scales as the dependent variable. The results of the analyses are summarized in Table 1.

Statistically significant effects were present on only the first three of the six analyses. On the semantic differential scales, both race and belief generated statistically significant effects. However, belief explained more than three times as much variance as race.

TABLE 1

ANALYSES OF VARIANCE: EFFECTS OF RACE AND BELIEF ON
6 MEASUREMENT OF PREJUDICE BEHAVIOR

Source	df	Evaluative Bipolar Scales		Formal Social Acceptance (Factor I)		Marital Acceptance (Factor II)	
		MS	F	MS	F	MS	F
A (race)	1	497.29	13.82**	43.75	2.51	336.04	11.84**
B (belief)	1	1144.32	31.79**	116.04	6.66*	41.29	1.46
C (primacy)	1	38.89	1.08	43.75	2.51	5.14	
A x B	1	11.57		.89		1.74	
A x C	1	2.28		4.32		1.75	
B x C	1	43.75	1.22	6.03		5.14	
A x B x C	1	2.29		.90		4.33	
error	104	35.99		17.42		28.37	

Source	df	Friendship (Factor III)		Hostile Acceptance vs. Social Distance (Factor IV)		Factors 1-4 Combined	
		MS	F	MS	F	MS	F
A (race)	1	9.72		13.58		1008.00	3.46
B (belief)	1	58.58	2.06	42.51	2.03	984.14	3.38
C (primacy)	1	37.72	1.32	47.58	2.27	480.57	1.65
A x B	1	.44		.22		.33	
A x C	1	.23		2.58		1.75	
B x C	1	4.73		25.08	1.19	141.76	
A x B x C	1	2.00		18.08		46.27	
error	104	28.49		20.93		291.29	

** $p < .01$ * $p < .05$

More interesting, however, are the results on the behavior differentials. On Factor I, formal social acceptance with subordination versus formal social rejection with superordination, belief had a significant effect with race having a negligible effect. On Factor II, marital acceptance versus rejection, however, race had a significant effect, whereas belief had no significant effect.

These findings seem to be in direct contradiction to Rokeach's and Bulatao's findings that on both friendship and marriage ratings, belief was a more decisive factor. Present findings are, however, to some extent, in agreement with Triandis and Davis' (1965) who found that in the case of intimate behaviors, race was more important than belief; where non-intimate be-

haviors are concerned, belief proved to be more important than race.

REFERENCES

- ADORNO, T.E. FRENKEL-BRUNSWICK, LEVINSON, D., and SANFORD, R.N. *The authoritarian Personality*. New York: Harper and Row, 1950.
- BULATAO, R.A. *A test of the belief congruence principle in prejudice against Chinese in the Philippines*. Unpublished master's thesis, University of the Philippines, 1967.
- BYRNE, D. and T.J. WONG. Racial prejudice, interpersonal attraction and assumed dissimilarity of attitudes. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1962, 65, 246-253.

- ROKEACH, M. *The open and closed mind*. New York: Basic Books, 1960.
- SMITH, C.B., WILLIAMS, L., and WILLIS, R.H. Race, sex and belief as determinants of friendship acceptance. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1967, 5, 126-237.
- STEIN, D.D., HARDYCK, J.A., and SMITH, M.B. Race and belief: An open and shut case. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1965, 1, 281-290.
- TAN, A.L. A survey of studies on anti-Sinoism in the Philippines. *Asian Studies*, 1968, 6, 198-207.
- TRIANDIS, H.E. A note on Rokeach's theory of prejudice. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1961, 62, 184-186.
- TRIANDIS, H.E. Exploratory factor analyses of the behavioral component of social attitudes. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1964, 2, 420-430.
- TRIANDIS, H.E. and DAVIS, E. Race and belief as determinants of behavioral intentions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 1965, 2, 715-725.
- WILLIS, R.H. Ethnic and national images among Filipino students. Paper presented before the National Convention of the Philippine Sociological Society, Manila, 1966.