Stigmatized Sources and Persuasion: Prejudice as a Determinant of Argument Scrutiny

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Two experiments examined the viability of several explanations for why majority group individuals process persuasive messages from stigmatized sources more than those from nonstigmatized sources. In each study, majority group participants who either were high or low in prejudice or were high or low in ambivalence toward a stigmatized source’s group were exposed to a persuasive communication attributed to a stigmatized (Black, Experiment 1; homosexual, Experiment 2) or nonstigmatized (White, Experiment 1; heterosexual, Experiment 2) source. In both studies, source stigmatization increased message scrutiny only among those who were low in prejudice toward the stigmatized group. This finding is most consistent with the view that people scrutinize messages from stigmatized sources in order to guard against possibly unfair reactions by themselves or others.

What impact do stigmatized sources have on persuasion, through what processes, and why? Stigmatized individuals are those who are members of social categories for which significant segments of society hold negative attitudes and beliefs (see Crocker & Major, 1989, for a review). Much of the persuasion research investigating the effect of stigmatized sources has focused on the impact of source ethnicity and sexual orientation on attitude change. Regarding source ethnicity, most of the initial studies found that sources whose ethnicity matched that of message recipients were more persuasive than sources whose ethnicity did not match (e.g., Block, 1972; Cohen & Peterson, 1981; Noel & Allen, 1976; Qualls & Moore, 1990; Whittler, 1989; Whittler & DiMeo, 1991), though there are some exceptions (e.g., Freedman, 1967; Solomon, Bush, & Hair, 1976). Studies investigating the impact of a source’s sexual orientation on persuasion have typically looked at the effectiveness of messages by homosexual sources in reducing homophobia (e.g., Chng & Moore, 1991; Goldberg, 1982; Morin, 1974). Although these studies suggest that homosexual sources can be effective in reducing homophobia, they are not informative about the impact of homosexual sources compared with heterosexual sources on persuasion topics not directly relevant to homosexuality.

Fewer investigations bear on the question of the processes by which stigmatized sources have an impact on persuasion. This question is important because understanding the processes by which attitude change is achieved can aid prediction of when stigmatized sources will be effective and what the properties of the induced attitudes are. In particular, the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion (ELM; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981; 1986a) provides a general framework for understanding both the effects of variables such as message source characteristics on persuasion processes and the strength of the resulting attitude changes. In brief, the ELM postulates two routes to persuasion. Attitude change can result from a person’s effortful and diligent scrutiny of all information perceived to be relevant to the central merits of the attitude object (central route), or the change can result from a variety of less effortful (shortcut) strategies such as examining early but not late arguments, counting arguments, relying on one’s liking for the source, and so forth (peripheral route; see Petty & Cacioppo, 1986b, Petty & Wegener, 1998, in press, for reviews; see also Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989, Chen & Chaiken, in press; for a similar perspective). Attitudes formed or changed through the central route have been shown to be relatively strong in that they tend to exhibit greater persistence over time, greater resistance to counterpersuasive attempts, and greater ability to predict behavior than do attitudes changed through the peripheral route (see Petty, Haugvedt, & Smith, 1995, for a review).

The ELM holds that stigmatized sources, like other features of the persuasion context, can serve in multiple roles in persuasion settings. Specifically, when the likelihood of thinking is constrained to be low, a stigmatized source is likely to influence attitudes through a simple mechanism such as invocation of the heuristic “agree with sources I like, but disagree with sources I dislike” (see Chaiken, 1987). When the likelihood of thinking is high (e.g., because the issue is of high relevance to the recipient; Petty & Cacioppo, 1979), stigmatized sources can bias thinking

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(see e.g., Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994; Petty, Schumann, Rich-
meyer, & Strathman, 1993) such that favorable thoughts are fostered
by likable sources and unfavorable thoughts by dislikable sources.
These processes could account for the dominant early findings that
stigmatized sources (from groups other than one’s own) appeared
to reduce persuasion (i.e., the stigmatized source could have served
as a simple rejection cue or led to negatively biased thinking; see
Petty & Wegener, 1998, in press, for additional discussion of
multiple roles for variables).

There is another possibility, however. The ELM holds that when
thinking is not constrained to be high or low by other variables—as
is probably the case in most persuasion contexts—source variables
can determine the extent of thinking (see e.g., Heesacker, Petty, &
Cacioppo, 1983). If a variable enhances the extent of thinking, then
one should see a greater polarization of both attitudes and thoughts
in response to strong and weak arguments when this variable is
present than when it is absent. A variable that increases thinking
about a message can therefore increase persuasion when the argu-
ments presented are strong and can decrease persuasion when the
arguments presented are weak (Petty & Cacioppo, 1979; Petty,
Wells, & Brock, 1976). In fact, the few studies that have examined
the processes by which stigmatized sources change attitudes have
supported the notion that stigmatized sources can motivate major-
ity group members to scrutinize the information presented more
than when the same information is presented by nonstigmatized
sources. Thus, in a series of studies, White and Harkins (1994)
found that message quality (i.e., strong vs. weak arguments) had a
greater impact on the thoughts and attitudes of Caucasian partic-
ipants when the arguments were presented by a Black or Hispanic
source than when presented by a White source. That is, across
several studies, they observed a Source Stigmatization × Argu-
ment Quality interaction on attitudes and valenced thoughts. In
a similar vein, Sheppard and Bodenhausen (1993) found that women
processed a message from a homosexual source more than from a
heterosexual source when they were told that they would later have
to justify their attitudes. The enhanced processing of messages
from stigmatized sources is a third possible account for the dom-
inant early finding that stigmatized sources were less persuasive
than nonstigmatized sources if one assumes that the elaboration
likelihood was not constrained to be high or low in these studies
and that the messages used were either highly counterattitudinal or
contained relatively weak arguments such that people would be
likely to generate unfavorable thoughts when thinking about them.

In the current research we sought to answer the question of why
majority group members appear to be more motivated to think
about information that is presented by stigmatized rather than
nonstigmatized sources in a context in which the elaboration
likelihood is not constrained to be high or low. One finding from
previous research bears on this question. Specifically, White and
Harkins (1994, Experiment 5) found that the enhanced processing
of Black and Hispanic sources was not likely due to the fact that
these stigmatized sources were simply more unexpected by
Whites, or that the position taken was more surprising when
advocated by a Black or Hispanic than by a White source. They
showed that sources from different racial groups (i.e., Asian
source, Native American source) whose race was unexpected or
whose position was surprising, but who were relatively liked on
average by members of the participant population, did not elicit
any more message processing than did White sources. Only the

Why Stigmatized Sources Might Elicit More Processing
Than Nonstigmatized Sources

Source Negativity Hypothesis

What accounts for the enhanced processing of information from
stigmatized compared to nonstigmatized sources? Two theories
suggest that recipient negativity toward the source’s group moti-
vates processing, and thus each predicts that high prejudiced
majority group individuals (i.e., those who are most negative)
should be most likely to show increased processing of information
from stigmatized sources. First, as suggested by White and Har-
kins (1994) and Sheppard and Bodenhausen (1993), aversive rac-

isim might motivate increased processing of stigmatized sources.
The theory of aversive racism (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986) holds
that many majority group members are aversive racists who si-
multaneously hold culturally learned feelings of discomfort and
negativity towards members of stigmatized groups yet also en-

dorse egalitarian beliefs. Aversive racists are expected to express
their discomfort with stigmatized individuals only when it will not
be recognized as prejudiced, such as when norms dictating appro-
priate behavior in a situation are unclear (e.g., Frey & Gaertner,
1986), or when an unfavorable response can be rationalized or
justified by attributing its cause to nonracial factors (e.g., Gaertner
& Dovidio, 1977). Both White and Harkins (1994) and Sheppard
and Bodenhausen (1993) argue that by elaborately processing

information presented by a stigmatized source, aversive racists can
“cover their bases” by providing themselves with possible non-

prejudicial justification for any negative attitudinal response (e.g.,
“I’m negative because the arguments were weak”). Thus, the
aversive racism framework suggests that majority group individu-

als who harbor negativity toward Blacks might process in order to
justify a negative response (though this processing goal could be
implicit).

Second, questioning the source’s trustworthiness because of his
or her membership in a stigmatized group might motivate in-
creased processing. Priester and Petty (1995) found that individu-
als who are not typically motivated to think about information (i.e.,
those who are low in need for cognition; Cacioppo & Petty, 1982)

1 For brevity, only the aspects of each theory that explain the Source Stigmatization × Argument Quality interaction are outlined even though each theory might also explain other effects of stigmatized sources (e.g., why stigmatized sources serve as cues or bias processing).
processed a message more when the expertise of the message source was high but the trustworthiness of the source was questionable than when expertise and trustworthiness were both high. They argued that the increased processing of a message from an untrusted source resulted from the tension individuals experience between wanting to hold correct attitudes but also wanting to conserve their limited cognitive resources. To the extent that message recipients can be sure that the information provided in a message is accurate, they do not need to think about it as much as when they are unsure of message accuracy (see also Eagly, Chaiken, & Wood, 1981). Recent evidence suggests that high-prejudiced Whites (as measured by the Modern Racism Scale [MRS]; McConahay, Hardee, & Batls, 1981) are less likely to endorse the belief that the trait “honest” characterizes African Americans (4%) than are low-prejudiced Whites (76%; Devine & Elliot, 1995). Thus high-prejudiced majority group individuals might be most likely to scrutinize the messages provided by stigmatized sources because they are skeptical of this information and must process carefully in order to determine for themselves the merit of the arguments.

**Watchdog Hypothesis**

In stark contrast to theories that explain the prior findings by assuming that it is the most highly prejudiced members of society who would most likely to scrutinize messages from stigmatized sources (e.g., to justify their prejudice or because of an assumed lack of trustworthiness), it is also possible to hypothesize that it is the least prejudiced members of society who would engage in the most scrutiny of messages from stigmatized sources. Specifically, it is possible that people who are low in prejudice are motivated to process messages from stigmatized sources because the message recipients are aware that these groups are viewed negatively by many in society and are the target of discrimination. The fact that people process messages more from members of disliked (e.g., Blacks, Hispanics) rather than liked (e.g., Asian, Native American) ethnic groups (White & Harkins, 1994) does not imply that it is the members of society who dislike these groups who are doing the processing. Rather, it could be that it is the members of society who are actually least prejudiced who do the processing to guard against discrimination either on their own part or on the part of others.

Research on prejudice suggests that people who are low in prejudice can still be cognizant of negative cultural stereotypes of stigmatized groups and these stereotypes can be automatically activated (Devine, 1989). Thus, for example, people low in prejudice might be more diligent in processing information that comes from a stigmatized source in order to ensure that their own responses are not prejudiced (Monteith, 1993). That is, low-prejudiced individuals know that there is a chance that they might act more prejudicially toward stigmatized group members than their true nonprejudiced standards allow (Devine, Monteith, Zwerink, & Elliot, 1991; Monteith, Devine, & Zwerink, 1993). To avoid acting on their automatically activated negative stereotypes, low-prejudiced individuals might process information carefully in situations in which a stigmatized group member is present in order to determine a response that is consistent with their nonprejudicial beliefs, and thus reduce the likelihood of behaving prejudicially and violating their self-standards (Monteith, 1993). High-prejudiced individuals, on the other hand, are not motivated to avoid prejudiced responses (Dunton & Fuzzo, 1997) and thus would not engage in effortful elaboration of information emanating from a stigmatized individual.

**Ambivalence Hypothesis**

Finally, two related theories suggest that it is neither the most highly prejudiced nor those least prejudiced toward stigmatized sources who would process their messages more. Rather it is those who are ambivalent toward the stigmatized source who would show the most processing. First, ambivalence—response amplification theory (Katz, Wackenhut, & Hass, 1986) predicts that majority group members who are aware of and endorse both positive and negative beliefs toward a particular stigmatized group (i.e., those who are ambivalent) will often show polarized responses to information from sources who are members of the group. Specifically, this theory posits that any valenced response, either positive or negative, toward members of a stigmatized group is self-threatening to ambivalent majority group individuals because either response conflicts with a component of their attitudes. When responding either positively or negatively toward stigmatized individuals, ambivalent majority group individuals tend to see themselves “as having friendly feelings for a more-or-less discredited, unworthy other, or as having aversive feelings about someone less fortunate than himself” (Katz et al., 1986, p. 45). In order to reduce this threat to their self-image, ambivalent individuals will justify (elaborate) their valenced response (either positive or negative) toward members of stigmatized groups, leading to response amplification or polarization (see Tesser, Martin, & Mendolia, 1995, for a review of research on thought-induced attitude polarization). Thus, in a situation in which the message arguments are strong and an initial favorable response is elicited, justification of this positive response would lead to more favorable attitudes. In a situation in which the message arguments are weak and an initial negative response is elicited, justification would lead to less favorable attitudes. Because of this, ambivalent individuals would be expected to have attitudes that were more polarized to strong and weak messages than would unambivalent individuals.

A second perspective on ambivalence was presented by Maio, Bell, and Esse (1996). These authors suggested that individuals who are ambivalent about a minority group would engage in greater processing of a group-relevant message because message processing might uncover information that would help them resolve their ambivalence toward the group. In support of this view, they found that non-Oriental message recipients who were ambivalent toward Orientals (controlling for prejudice level) were more influenced by the quality of the arguments in a message in favor of immigration from Hong Kong than were message recipients who were relatively unambivalent. Although the Maio et al. (1996) analysis is especially cogent when the message topic is directly relevant to the group toward which one feels ambivalence, it is possible that people might also engage in greater processing of any topic presented by a source toward whom they feel ambivalence, because they believe that processing messages from these sources might help to reduce ambivalence about the source.
Overview of the Present Research

On the basis of past literature, several explanations for why majority members process messages from stigmatized sources more than those from nonstigmatized sources were proposed. We grouped these explanations into those which predict that either high-prejudiced, low-prejudiced, or highly ambivalent majority group members would be most likely to engage in greater scrutiny of messages from stigmatized than from nonstigmatized sources. Specifically, the aversive racism and trustworthiness accounts predict that people who are highest in prejudice (i.e., high in antigroup and low in progroup sentiments) would be most likely to show enhanced processing of a message from stigmatized sources. Second, the watchdog hypothesis holds that it is individuals who are lowest in prejudice (i.e., low in antigroup and high in progroup sentiments) who would show the effect. Finally, the ambivalence perspective holds that it is individuals who endorse both antigroup and progroup beliefs who are most likely to show the effect.

These competing explanations are examined in the present research. In each of two studies, recipients were exposed to a communication from either a stigmatized or nonstigmatized source (African American or White in Study 1; homosexual or heterosexual in Study 2) who presented either strong or weak arguments in favor of an advocacy that was not particularly relevant to either the stigmatized or nonstigmatized groups. Therefore, on the basis of the message topic, the background elaboration likelihood was kept moderate. Although responses were relatively private, participants believed that at least the experimenter would view their responses. These features were included in order to maximize the likelihood that source stigma would motivate message processing (Sheppard & Bodenhausen, 1993). We expected to replicate prior findings that people engage in greater processing of messages from stigmatized (i.e., Black or homosexual) than from nonstigmatized (i.e., White or heterosexual) sources. That is, argument quality should have a greater impact on attitudes toward the advocated position when the source is a member of a stigmatized than of a nonstigmatized group. Of greater interest, we attempted to examine the viability of each of the accounts for this effect that we outlined previously by including one or more measures of prejudice and ambivalence toward the stigmatized source’s group, because each of the theories makes different predictions as to which variable will moderate the processing effect and how it will do so.

Previous studies examining the effect of prejudice on responses to messages by sources from stigmatized groups have not varied argument quality and have tended to find that high prejudiced Whites are more persuaded by a same-ethnicity (i.e., White) than by a different-ethnicity (i.e., Black) source, and that low prejudiced Whites are more or equally persuaded by a different-ethnicity than by a same-ethnicity source (Aronson & Golden, 1962; Bush, Hair, & Solomon, 1979; Cagley & Cardozo, 1970). This could be because high prejudiced Whites process messages from Black sources more (as predicted by the aversive racism and trustworthiness accounts) and previous studies used primarily weak arguments (such that high-prejudiced Whites would be more likely than low-prejudiced Whites to realize the weakness of the arguments and thus would be less persuaded by Black than by White sources). Or, it could be that low-prejudiced Whites process messages from Black sources more (as predicted by the watchdog account) and previous studies used mostly strong arguments (such that low-prejudiced Whites would be more likely than high-prejudiced Whites to realize the strengths of the arguments and thus would be more persuaded by Black than White sources). By including measures of prejudice along with an argument quality manipulation, these (and other) possibilities can be examined.2

Experiment 1

Participants and Design

Three hundred fifteen White undergraduate students at Ohio State University participated in the study for course credit in either their introductory marketing (n = 226) or introductory psychology (n = 89) classes. The students were randomly assigned to the cells of a 2 (race of source: Black or White) × 2 (argument quality: strong or weak) factorial design. In addition, participants were classified as either high or low in racial prejudice and as either high or low in racial ambivalence, as described shortly.

Procedure

Psychology students completed the MRS (McConahay et al., 1981) in a prescreening session. Those participants whose scores on the MRS were in the top or bottom extremes of the prescreening sample distribution were contacted by phone several days before the experiment and asked to participate in a study on “media evaluation.” Those who could not be contacted were replaced by individuals whose scores were progressively less extreme until the study was completed. This procedure was used in order to deliberately overrepresent Whites who reported being either very low or very high in prejudice toward Blacks. Prescreening data were not available for marketing participants. A White female experimenter who was unaware of participants’ prejudice levels conducted all sessions. Participants were given a questionnaire booklet that included all experimental manipulations and measures. The first sheet of the booklet explained that the study was being conducted to investigate how people evaluate different types of news stories. Participants were instructed that they would read a short biography of the author before reading the editorial, and then would be asked about their impressions of the editorial. Following this, everyone completed the experimental booklet, which contained the Race of Source and Argument Quality manipulations, the persuasive message, and all measures. At the end of the study, participants read a debriefing sheet and were thanked and dismissed.

Independent Variables

Race of source. A picture of the author was included in his brief biography. Those in the Black source condition saw a photo of an African American man, whereas those in the White source condition saw a Caucasian man. Two pictures of Black men and two pictures of White men were used in order to minimize the impact of idiosyncratic features of the pictures other than race. The Black and White photos were matched as closely as possible for aspects of appearance other than race (e.g., age, clothing, attractiveness, and facial expression), and were counterbalanced across argument quality conditions. Following the picture was text describing the author as an editor of a student newspaper at a distant university.

Argument quality. Following the Race of Source manipulation, participants read one of two versions of the persuasive message, a news editorial arguing in favor of senior comprehensive exams. Participants in the strong

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2 White and Harkins (1994) briefly noted a pilot study in which they looked for moderation of the Source Stigma × Argument Quality effect by prejudice level and found none (but see Footnote 10).
argument condition read a message containing four compelling arguments in favor of the exams, whereas participants in the weak argument condition read a message containing four specious arguments in favor of the exams. The arguments were the same as those used by White and Harkins (1994), which were adapted from those developed by Petty and Cacioppo (1986a). No mention was made about whether the exams were being considered for implementation at the participants' own university, leaving the personal relevance of the message uncertain. Pretesting with Ohio State University students revealed that the strong message was more persuasive and elicited more positive cognitive responses than did the weak message (see Petty & Cacioppo, 1986a, for a complete description of argument pretesting procedures).

**Prejudice level.** After responding to all of the dependent measures, participants completed two measures of prejudice toward Blacks, the MRS (McConahay et al., 1981) and the Pro-Black and Anti-Black Scales (Katz and Hass, 1988). For all participants, we used the individual difference measures collected at the experimental session (though the analyses are the same if the earlier prescreening scores were used for those for whom they were available). In completing the MRS, participants rated seven items on 5-point scales ranging from disagree strongly (1) to agree strongly (5). These items were embedded in a 30-item scale concerning various political opinions in order to reduce the obviousness of the items' association with attitudes toward African Americans. Composite MRS scores were computed for all participants by summing participants' ratings on the seven items, reverse scoring as necessary. In completing the Pro-Black and Anti-Black Scales, participants rated 20 items (10 pro-Black items, and 10 anti-Black items) on 6-point scales ranging from strongly disagree (0) to strongly agree (5). Composite pro-Black and anti-Black scores were computed according to the procedure outlined by Katz and Hass (1988), and composite prejudice scores were computed by adding the anti-Black total to the reverse-scored pro-Black total.²

The MRS and Katz and Hass composite prejudice measures correlated quite highly, $r = .72$, $p < .01$. Thus, participants' scores on both measures were used to create high- and low-prejudiced groups. Specifically, a median split was performed on both prejudice measures, and participants who were above the median on both measures were classified as high in prejudice, whereas those below the median on both measures were classified as low in prejudice. This procedure eliminated 71 (inconsistently prejudiced) people from further analyses, leaving a total of 242 participants. In this sample, MRS scores ranged from 7 to 32 with a median of 16, and Katz and Hass prejudice scores ranged from 4 to 96 with a median of 50.

**Ambivalence level.** Racial ambivalence scores were computed in four ways using participants' pro-Black and anti-Black scores. First, we used the formula developed by Hass, Katz, and colleagues (Hass, Katz, Rizzo, Bailey, & Moore, 1992; Katz et al., 1986) to measure racial ambivalence, which entails multiplying each participant's pro-Black score by his or her anti-Black score. Second, we computed ambivalence with the formula used by Maio et al. (1996). This formula is the same as that developed by Thompson, Zanna, and Griffin (1995), though the derivation is different. Third, we computed the most widely used ambivalence formula, that developed by Kaplan (1972). Finally, we used the gradual threshold model formula developed by Priester and Petty (1996) that was found to be best in predicting self-reports of ambivalence. It was found that all four ambivalence measures were highly correlated in this sample ($rs$ ranging from .73 to .98, $p < .05$). Thus, analogous to the method used to create high- and low-prejudiced groups, participants' scores from all four ambivalence computations were used to create high- and low-ambivalence groups. Specifically, participants who were above the median on all four ambivalence indexes were classified as high in ambivalence, and those below the median on all four measures were classified as low in ambivalence. This procedure eliminated 76 people from further analyses, leaving a total of 239. In this sample, Katz and Hass (Katz et al., 1986) ambivalence scores ranged from 9 to 1620 ($Mdn = 726$), Maio et al. (1996; or Thompson et al., 1995) scores ranged from $-40$ to 78 ($Mdn = 40$), Kaplan (1972) scores ranged from 2 to 38 ($Mdn = 23$), and Priester and Petty (1996) scores ranged from 21 to 12.87 ($Mdn = 10.02$).

**Dependent Measures**

**Attitude index.** Attitudes toward senior comprehensive exams were assessed with five questions. First, participants indicated the extent to which they agreed with the proposal that college seniors should take a comprehensive exam before graduating on an 11-point scale which ranged from do not agree at all (1) to agree completely (11). Next, they rated "senior comprehensive exams" on four 9-point semantic differential scales anchored by good—bad, beneficential—harmful, wise—foolish, and favorable—unfavorable. The raw score attitude measures were internally consistent (Cronbach's $\alpha = .96$) and thus were standardized and averaged to form a second overall attitude index.

**Thought positivity.** Following the attitude measures, participants were asked to list the thoughts and feelings they had while reading the editorial about comprehensive exams. Participants were told to put only one thought or feeling on a line and to ignore spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Eighteen lines were provided to list individual reactions. After listing their thoughts and feelings for 3 min, they were instructed to go back and rate their statements as being either positive, negative, or neutral toward the proposal (see Cacioppo & Petty, 1981, for additional details concerning the thought-listing and scoring procedure). A thought positivity measure was created by subtracting the total number of negative thoughts from the total number of positive thoughts, and dividing this number by the total number of thoughts.

**Manipulation checks.** To check on the race of source manipulation, participants were asked to identify the race of the source in a multiple choice question reading, "The author of the article is: a. Black; b. Caucasian; c. Asian; d. Hispanic; e. Other." To investigate the effectiveness of the argเดšt guilty manipulation, participants were asked to indicate, "Were the arguments used in the article of high quality?" on an 11-point scale ranging from not at all (1) to very much (11).

**Results**

**Manipulation Checks**

In response to the multiple choice question about the race of the source, only 1 participant in the Black source condition incorrectly

² Because the available self-report measures of prejudice toward Blacks have been the subject of recent controversy, with some studies supporting their validity and others questioning it (e.g., see Doğdo, Kawakami, Johnson, Johnson, & Howard, 1997; Fazio, Jackson, Denton, & Williams, 1995; Judd, Park, Ryan, Brauer, & Kraus, 1995; Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 1997; Vaillant, Paul, Ino, & Miller, 1997), a pilot study was conducted to examine the utility of the MRS and Pro-Black and Anti-Black Scales in our participant population. One hundred twenty-seven White undergraduate students at Ohio State University completed a social desirability measure (the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding, Paulhus, 1991), the MRS (McConahay et al., 1981), and the Pro- and Anti-Black Scales (Katz & Hass, 1988), in that order, in a mass survey. Correlations among the measures suggested that the prejudice measures were each significantly correlated with one another in the expected direction (e.g., MRS with Katz and Hass composite measure, $r = .87$, $p < .01$). However, none of the prejudice measures were significantly correlated with social desirability (all $rs > -.08$ and $< .08$). These results support the notion that the prejudice measures we used are not subject to social desirability concerns—at least in our sample—and are appropriate for use in Experiment 1 to examine the alternative theories that can account for the increased processing of information from stigmatized sources.
recalled the source’s race as White. Also, just 1 participant in the White source condition incorrectly recalled the source’s race as “Other.” Thus, participants were highly accurate in identifying the race of the source.

All other measures were subjected to 2 (race of source: Black or White) × 2 (argument quality: strong or weak) × 2 (prejudice level: low or high) between-participants analyses of variance (ANOVA). As expected, the analysis of responses to the argument quality manipulation check revealed a main effect for argument quality, \( F(1, 234) = 47.64, p < .01 \), such that participants exposed to strong arguments rated the arguments as of higher quality (\( M = 6.79 \)) than did participants exposed to weak arguments (\( M = 4.73 \)). Two marginal effects, one of race of source, \( F(1, 234) = 2.83, p < .10 \), the other of prejudice level, \( F(1, 234) = 3.39, p < .07 \), were also found. These effects indicated that participants tended to rate the arguments in the article as of higher quality when the source was Black (\( M = 5.92 \)) than when the source was White (\( M = 5.52 \)) and that low-prejudiced participants tended to rate the arguments as of higher quality (\( M = 6.03 \)) than did high-prejudiced participants (\( M = 5.44 \)). Finally, these effects were qualified by a Race of Source × Argument Quality interaction, \( F(1, 234) = 4.59, p < .05 \), indicating that participants differentiated their judgments of the strength of the arguments more when the source was Black than when the source was White. This finding is consistent with the view that the substance of a message would receive greater scrutiny when it came from a stigmatized source.

**Attitudes**

A main effect of argument quality on attitudes was found, \( F(1, 234) = 42.41, p < .01 \), such that participants exposed to strong arguments held more positive attitudes toward the senior comprehensive exam proposal (\( M = .38 \)) than did participants exposed to weak arguments (\( M = -.34 \)). In addition, an interaction of Race of Source × Prejudice Level was obtained, \( F(1, 234) = 3.85, p < .05 \), indicating that high-prejudiced participants were more persuaded by the White source than by the Black source and that low-prejudiced participants were more persuaded by the Black source than by the White source, replicating the pattern of some past persuasion research on prejudice and persuasion that did not vary argument quality. Of greatest interest, these effects were qualified by a three-way interaction of Race of Source × Argument Quality × Prejudice Level, \( F(1, 234) = 7.55, p < .01 \) (see Figure 1, top, and Table 1, top). This interaction was examined by analyzing the Race of Source × Argument Quality interactions for high- and low-prejudiced participants separately.

For high-prejudiced individuals, the main effect of argument quality, \( F(1, 119) = 21.27, p < .01 \), \( M_{\text{strong}} = .33, M_{\text{weak}} = -.43 \), was qualified by a marginal interaction of Race of Source × Argument Quality, \( F(1, 119) = 3.15, p < .08 \) (Figure 1, top left). This interaction indicated that high-prejudiced individuals tended to process the message more when it was from a White source than a Black source. For low-prejudiced participants, the main effect of argument quality, \( F(1, 115) = 21.64, p < .01 \), \( M_{\text{strong}} = .44, M_{\text{weak}} = -.24 \), was also qualified by a two-way interaction, \( F(1, 115) = 4.67, p < .05 \) (Figure 1, top right). This interaction revealed that low-prejudiced individuals processed the message more when it was from a Black source than a White source. Thus, the three-way interaction was due to opposite processing patterns for high- and low-prejudiced participants.

In order to test the hypothesis that ambivalence toward Blacks would moderate the processing effect, a 2 (race of source) × 2 (argument quality) × 2 (racial ambivalence: low or high) between-participants ANOVA was conducted on mean attitude scores. This three-way interaction was not significant (\( F < 1 \)).

**Thought Positivity**

If the pattern of attitude data is due to variations in valenced thinking, then the results from the thought positivity measure should mirror the attitude results. The data for only 227 participants were available for this measure because of the failure of 15 people to score the valence of their thoughts. This analysis produced a main effect of argument quality on thought positivity, \( F(1, 219) = 22.31, p < .01 \), such that people exposed to strong arguments reported a greater proportion of positive thoughts (\( M = .05 \)) than did those exposed to weak arguments (\( M = -.35 \)). Of greater interest, this main effect was qualified by a Race of Source × Argument Quality × Prejudice Level interaction, \( F(1, 219) = 10.99, p < .01 \) (Figure 1, bottom, and Table 1, bottom). Analyzing the Race of Source × Argument Quality interactions for high- and low-prejudiced participants separately revealed that for high prejudiced individuals, the main effect of argument quality, \( F(1, 109) = 15.40, p < .01 \), \( M_{\text{strong}} = .05, M_{\text{weak}} = -.43 \), was qualified by a two-way interaction, \( F(1, 109) = 9.13, p < .01 \). The interaction indicated that the thought positivity of high-prejudiced individuals was more affected by argument quality when the source was White than Black. For low-prejudiced participants, the main effect of argument quality on thoughts, \( F(1, 110) = 7.73, p < .01 \), \( M_{\text{strong}} = .05, M_{\text{weak}} = -.28 \), was qualified by a marginal two-way interaction, \( F(1, 110) = 2.87, p < .09 \), suggesting that the thought positivity of low-prejudiced individuals was more affected by argument quality when the source was Black than White. Thus, as was found on the attitude measure, the three-way interaction was due to opposite processing patterns for high- and low-prejudiced participants.

Again, to test the hypothesis that ambivalence toward Blacks

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4 Separate ANOVAs using either the MRS or Katz and Hass (1988) prejudice measures separately, or a summation of responses to the 10 pro-Black items, produced the same three-way interaction, as did a regression analysis using standardized and averaged scores on the MRS and Katz and Hass prejudice measures as a continuous variable.

5 Separate ANOVAs using each of the four ambivalence formulas to classify participants into high and low racial ambivalence groups: analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs) using any of the prejudice measures as a covariate (see Maio et al., 1996), and regression analyses in which ambivalence was entered as a continuous rather than dichotomous measure all failed to result in any three-way interactions (all \( Fs < 1 \)). Finally, the three-way interaction of Race of Source × Argument Quality × Prejudice Level remained significant when ambivalence was controlled using any of the ambivalence measures (\( Fs > 7.0, ps < .01 \)).

6 As was found for the attitude measure, ANOVAs using either the MRS or Katz and Hass (1988) composite prejudice measure separately, and a regression analysis using standardized and averaged scores on the MRS and Katz and Hass composite measure as a continuous variable, also revealed significant Race of Source × Argument Quality × Prejudice Level interactions on thought positivity.
was motivating greater processing of messages by Black than White sources, a 2 (race of source) × 2 (argument quality) × 2 (racial ambivalence) between-participants ANOVA was conducted on the thought positivity measure. As was true for attitudes, this three-way interaction was not found to be significant ($F < 1$).

### Discussion

Experiment 1 showed that low-prejudiced Whites were more influenced by the quality of the arguments in a message when the source was Black than when the source was White. High-prejudiced Whites showed the opposite pattern. Analyses of the thought index provided additional evidence that low-prejudiced Whites scrutinized a message more when it was presented by a Black source than a White source and that high-prejudiced Whites engaged in the opposite processing pattern. Thus, for the first time, moderation of the effect of source race on information processing was demonstrated.

In addition, it does not appear from our results that racial ambivalence motivates Whites to process information from Black and White sources differentially—at least when the source is speaking on a topic irrelevant to race. Thus, the effect obtained by Maio and colleagues (1996) might be most likely when the topic of the communication concerns the group about which one has ambivalent attitudes. It is for such topics, of course, that processing would be most likely to help resolve one’s ambivalence.

More important, the finding from Experiment 1 that low-prejudiced Whites are particularly likely to think about information presented by a Black source renders one of the explanations for the enhanced processing of stigmatized sources more likely.

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7 The same ambivalence ANOVAs and regressions as conducted for attitudes failed to reveal any Race of Source × Argument Quality × Ambivalence interactions on thought positivity (all $F$s $< 1$). In addition, the ANCOVA analyses entering prejudice level as the covariate failed to reveal any three-way interactions. Finally, the ANCOVAs with ambivalence as the covariate revealed that the Race of Source × Argument Quality × Prejudice Level interaction remained significant, regardless of how the ambivalence covariate was calculated (all $F$s $> 10.0$, $p$s $< .01$).
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High prejudiced</th>
<th>Low prejudiced</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black source</td>
<td>White source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument quality</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>0.10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>-0.36</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

than the others. Specifically, it appears that theories expecting high-prejudiced individuals to process information from Blacks more—either because of aversive racism or skepticism about a Black source’s trustworthiness—cannot account for the data obtained. Nor can theories expecting people who are ambivalent about Blacks to process more (because of either ambivalence-induced response amplification or a desire to reduce ambivalence) account for the observed findings. Neither high-prejudiced Whites nor highly ambivalent Whites were found to process information on a race-irrelevant topic from a Black source more than a White source. In fact, highly prejudiced Whites tended to do the opposite. Instead, the results of this study point to theories predicting increased processing of stigmatized sources by low-prejudiced individuals. That is, the results of Experiment 1 are most consistent with the view that message recipients act as watchdogs. One type of watchdog activity would be to ensure that one avoids acting in a manner that conflicts with one’s nonprejudiced personal beliefs. Of the various explanations gleaned from the literature, this account, based on the work by Devine, Monteith, and their colleagues (e.g., Devine et al., 1991; Monteith, 1993), most easily accommodates our finding that processing of Black sources was greatest for low prejudiced individuals.

In order to provide a replication and expand the generalizability of Experiment 1, a second study was conducted examining a different stigmatized group: homosexual sources. The use of this group also provides a convergent technique for reexamining the source negativity and ambivalence hypotheses, because those who harbor negativity toward homosexuals might be more likely to admit to it than those who harbor negativity toward Blacks (Herek, 1991, 1994), attenuating concerns about social desirability (see also Footnote 3). Thus, one might be more confident of assessing negative attitudes to the extent that they exist.

Experiment 2

Experiment 2 was designed to directly examine whether majority group members (i.e., heterosexuals) process group-irrelevant information more when it comes from a homosexual than from a heterosexual source. Because Sheppard and Bodenhausen (1993) used a message topic that was related to homosexuality (i.e., repeal of the ban on homosexuals in the military), it is possible that majority group individuals processed information by the homosexual more than the heterosexual source because they believed that the homosexual source was more knowledgeable about the topic than the heterosexual source was. Alternatively, perhaps they processed more because they were suspicious of the vested interest of the source (Priester & Petty, 1995), or, as suggested by Maio et al. (1996), because they were ambivalent in attitudes toward homosexuals and thought they could resolve their ambivalence by processing a gay-related issue. In any case, the question remains as to whether heterosexuals will show increased processing of information from a homosexual than from a heterosexual source when the topic is completely irrelevant to homosexuality, and thus the source expertise and source suspicion confounds are absent, and the reduction of ambivalence possibility is less salient.

Assuming that the effect of increased processing of information by nonethnic stigmatized sources generalizes to nongay topics, the second and more interesting question that we address is whether the motivation behind the increased processing of nonethnic stigmatized sources is the same as or different from that for racially stigmatized sources. Recall that Sheppard and Bodenhausen (1993) suggested that the enhanced processing of a message from a homosexual source was possibly due to motives similar to aversive racism. If the aversive racism framework is applied to attitudes towards homosexuals, it would predict that those highest in negativity toward homosexuals would be especially likely to show increased processing. To test whether increased processing of information by a homosexual source occurs, and if so, is explained by aversive racism, the watchdog theory that received support in Experiment 1, or the other theories we outlined, a second experiment was conducted.

Method

Participants and Design

Forty-eight heterosexual undergraduate students at Ohio State University participated in the study for course credit in their introductory psychology class. The participants were randomly assigned to the cells of a 2 (source orientation: homosexual or heterosexual) × 2 (argument quality: strong or weak) factorial design. In addition, participants were classified as either high or low in prejudice and ambivalence toward homosexuals, as described below.
Procedure

Over one hundred undergraduates from the introductory psychology course at Ohio State University completed the Heterosexuals Attitudes Toward Homosexuals Scale (HATH; Larsen, Reed, & Hoffman, 1980) as part of a larger survey administered early in the quarter. Heterosexuals whose scores on the HATH were at the top or bottom extremes of the total sample were contacted by phone several days before the experiment and asked to participate in a study on "media evaluation." Those who could not be contacted were replaced by individuals whose scores were progressively less extreme until the participant allotment for this experiment had been depleted (n = 38). Participants were not informed about the relationship between the study and their completion of the HATH at the start of the quarter. The following quarter, 10 participants for whom pretested HATH scores were not available were added to complete the study. All participants filled out the HATH and other individual-differences measures at the end of the experimental session. For all participants, we used the individual-differences measures collected at the experimental session (though the analyses are the same if the earlier prescreening scores are used for those for whom they were available).

When participants arrived at the lab, they were greeted by a female experimenter who was unaware of the participants' prejudice level. They were seated in partitioned cubicles which contained two questionnaire booklets. The first was virtually identical to that given to participants in Experiment 1 except as noted below. The second questionnaire booklet contained the prejudice measures. Upon completion of both booklets, participants returned them to the experimenter and were debriefed, thanked, and dismissed.

Independent Variables

Source orientation. As in Experiment 1, all participants first read a biographical sheet about the author of the article they were about to read. The same two pictures of White men that were used in the White source conditions in Experiment 1 were used to depict the source. However, in this experiment, the text following the picture was changed in order to explicitly establish the source's sexual orientation. Those in the homosexual source condition read that the source "is active with the Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual group and lives with his partner, Stephen Palmer," whereas those in the heterosexual source condition read that the source "is active with the Environmental Action group and lives with his partner, Stephanie Palmer."

Argument quality. Following the source sexual orientation manipulation, participants read one of the same strong or weak versions of the persuasive message used in Experiment 1, an editorial arguing in favor of senior comprehensive exams.

Prejudice level. All participants completed the HATH (Larsen et al., 1980) after responding to all of the dependent measures. In completing the HATH, participants responded to 20 items on 5-point scales ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). These items were intermixed with items from the four Katz and Hass (1988) scales, each of which contained 10 items (pro-Black, anti-Black, Protestant ethic, and humanitarian–egalitarian), in order to reduce the obviousness of the items' association with attitudes toward homosexuality. Composite HATH scores were computed following the procedure outlined by Larsen et al. (1980) such that higher scores on the HATH indicate lower prejudice, and a median split was performed to create the high- and low-prejudiced groups.

In this sample, the range of HATH scores was 20 to 100 and the median was 56.8

Ambivalence level. No measure of ambivalence toward homosexuals is currently available. Thus, in order to conduct exploratory analyses, the 10 positively worded HATH items and the 10 negatively worded HATH items (analogous to the 10 pro-Black and 10 anti-Black [Katz and Hass, 1988] items) were used as input to the same four ambivalence formulas and analyses used in Experiment 1. Again, it was found that all four ambivalence measures were highly correlated (rs ranging from .74 to .99, ps < .01). As in Experiment 1, participants whose ambivalence scores were above the median on all four ambivalence indexes were classified as high in ambivalence, and those below the median on all four measures were classified as low in ambivalence. This procedure eliminated 12 people from further analyses, leaving a total of 36 (though the results are the same if any one of the ambivalence measures is used and all participants are retained).

In this sample, Katz and Hass (Katz et al., 1986) ambivalence scores ranged from 390 to 1440 (Mdn = 728), Maio et al. (1996) or Thompson et al. (1995) scores ranged from −18 to 64 (Mdn = 20), Kaplan (1972) scores ranged from 10 to 32 (Mdn = 18), and Priester and Petty (1996) scores ranges from 5.99 to 11.73 (Mdn = 8.54).

Dependent Measures

The dependent measures used in this study were identical to those used in Experiment 1, with the exception of the manipulation check for source orientation. To check on this manipulation, participants were asked to identify the sexual orientation of the source in a multiple choice question reading, "The author of the article is: a. homosexual; b. heterosexual; c. bisexual; d. other."

Results

Manipulation Checks

Only 1 participant in the homosexual source condition incorrectly recalled the source's sexual orientation as heterosexual, and 2 incorrectly recalled the source's sexual orientation as "other." Three recalled the source's sexual orientation as bisexual. Thus, 74% of those who received a description of a homosexual source recalled his sexual orientation as having been homosexual, and 87% labeled the source as either homosexual or bisexual. In the heterosexual source condition, only 2 participants incorrectly recalled the source's sexual orientation as "other," and the remainder correctly recalled the source's sexual orientation as heterosexual.

All other measures were subjected to 2 (source orientation: heterosexual, homosexual) × 2 (argument quality: weak, strong) × 2 (prejudice level: low, high) between-participants ANOVAs. Analysis of the argument quality manipulation check revealed only a main effect for argument quality, F(1, 40) = 7.15, p < .02, such that participants exposed to strong arguments rated the arguments as of higher quality (M = 6.87) than did participants exposed to weak arguments (M = 4.96).

Attitudes

As in Experiment 1, all five raw score attitude measures were internally consistent (Cronbach’s α .97) and thus were standardized and averaged to form one overall index. A marginal main effect of Argument Quality, F(1, 40) = 3.17, p < .10, Mstrong = .27, Mweak = −.25, was qualified by a marginal two-way interaction of Source Orientation × Argument Quality, F(1, 40) = 2.84, p < .10, suggesting that heterosexual participants tended to
process the message more when it was from a homosexual than a heterosexual source. Of greater interest, however, this two-way interaction was qualified by a significant three-way interaction of Source Orientation × Argument Quality × Prejudice Level, $F(1, 40) = 6.15, p < .02$ (Figure 2, top, and Table 2, top). Analyzing the two-way interactions for high- and low-prejudiced participants separately revealed that for high-prejudiced participants, neither the main effects nor the interaction were reliable ($F_s < 1$; see Figure 2, top left). In contrast, for low-prejudiced participants, the main effect of argument quality, $F(1, 21) = 5.18, p < .04$, $M_{\text{strong}} = .45, M_{\text{weak}} = -.34$, was qualified by a Source Orientation × Argument Quality interaction, $F(1, 21) = 11.35, p < .01$, indicating that low-prejudiced participants were influenced more by the quality of the arguments presented by a homosexual than a heterosexual source (see Figure 2, top right).

The 2 (source orientation) × 2 (argument quality) × 2 (ambivalence) between-participants ANOVA did not result in a significant three-way interaction, $F(1, 28) = .62, p > .40$.

**Thought Positivity**

Only 38 participants scored their own thoughts, leaving a fifth of the entire sample with missing data for this measure. Thus, an independent coder who was blind to condition coded the valence of thoughts for all 48 participants. From the resulting ratings, the thought positivity measure was calculated as in Experiment 1. As was found for attitudes, a three-way interaction of Source Orientation × Argument Quality × Prejudice Level was uncovered, $F(1, 40) = 4.41, p < .05$ (see Figure 2, bottom, and Table 2, bottom). Analyzing the high- and low-prejudiced participants separately revealed that for high-prejudiced participants, no effects were significant (all $F_s < 1$; see Figure 2, bottom left). For low-prejudiced participants, a two-way interaction was found, $F(1, 21) = 8.01, p < .02$, showing that argument quality had an effect on thoughts when the message came from a homosexual, $F(1, 11) = 8.44, p < .02$, but not a heterosexual source, $F(1, 10) = 1.17, p = .31$ (see Figure 2, bottom right). Thus, the results for thoughts mirrored those for attitudes. Finally, the Source Orienta-
Table 2
Standardized Mean Attitude Ratings and Thought Positivity as a Function of Source Orientation, Argument Quality, and Participants’ Prejudice Level (Experiment 2)

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High prejudiced</th>
<th>Low prejudiced</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homosexual source</td>
<td>Heterosexual source</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argument quality</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
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<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
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<td>0.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitudes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thoughts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>-0.29</td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>-0.32</td>
<td>0.41</td>
</tr>
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Discussion

In sum, both the attitude and thought data from Experiment 2 provided the first evidence that majority group individuals processed information presented by a source who belonged to a stigmatized nonracial group (i.e., homosexuals) more than a source who belonged to a nonstigmatized group (i.e., heterosexuals) even though the message topic had nothing to do with the stigmatized group. Thus, recipients were unlikely to conclude that the source had greater expertise or vested interest in the issue, or to assume that they could learn something particular about the source or his stigmatized group by processing the message. Of greater interest, Experiment 2 showed that it was low-prejudiced individuals who engaged in the enhanced processing of the stigmatized source providing a conceptual replication of Experiment 1.

Two conclusions can be drawn from these findings. First, it appears that people low in prejudice toward homosexuals engage in greater scrutiny of information when it is presented by a homosexual than a heterosexual source even when the message topic is unrelated to homosexuality. Second, since this is the same conceptual effect that was obtained with African American sources in Experiment 1, it suggests that a common mechanism might be responsible for the enhanced processing of messages from stigmatized sources.

General Discussion

Past research has shown that persuasive messages from sources who belong to groups that are viewed relatively negatively by a substantial number of people in the majority population (e.g., homosexuals) receive greater scrutiny than messages from sources who belong to groups that are viewed more positively (see Sheppard & Bodenhausen, 1993; White & Harkins, 1994). Because of these results, it was tempting (and quite reasonable) for prior theorists to conclude that some negativity toward these sources was responsible for the enhanced processing. The results from the current two studies, however, demonstrate that it is the least prejudiced members of society who are the most likely to engage in enhanced scrutiny of messages from stigmatized sources. Those who are high in prejudice toward a particular stigmatized group either show similar processing of information from sources of stigmatized and nonstigmatized groups (Experiment 2) or actually process information from sources of stigmatized groups less than those from nonstigmatized groups (Experiment 1). Thus, although the enhanced processing effect occurs for sources who come from stigmatized groups when attitudes are considered at the societal level, on an individual level, it is the people who feel least negatively about these sources who are engaging in the most processing.9

Evidence of enhanced processing comes from the fact that the attitudes of low-prejudiced individuals were more influenced by the quality of the arguments presented by a stigmatized than a nonstigmatized source. In addition, the valenced thoughts low-prejudiced individuals generated were more responsive to argu-

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9 As in Experiment 1, regressions produced the same pattern of results on attitudes and thoughts, though statistically weaker. ANCOVAs revealed that the three-way interaction of Source × Argument Quality × Prejudice remained significant on attitudes (all ps < .02) when ambivalence was controlled and remained marginal on thoughts (all ps < .10), regardless of how ambivalence was calculated. To explore whether prejudice toward Blacks moderated processing of a message from a homosexual source, Source × Argument × Racial Prejudice (using a median split on the combined pro- and anti-Black prejudice measure) ANCOVAs on both the attitude and thought measures were examined and failed to reveal any three-way interactions, attitudes: F(1, 42) = .14, p = .70; thoughts: F(1, 42) = .12, p > .70. Thus, the tendency to process information from a stigmatized source appears to depend on one’s specific level of prejudice toward the source’s particular group, rather than being a function of any prejudice.

10 Some readers might wonder how these results can be reconciled with those of the pilot study reported briefly by White and Harkins (1994), in which no moderation of the stigmatized source processing effect by prejudice level was found (see Footnote 2). This may have occurred because White and Harkins recruited a cross section of college students into their study and did not attempt to overrepresent those at the extremes of the prejudice distribution, as we did. This possibility was recognized by White and Harkins.
ment quality when the source was stigmatized than when he was not. In order to provide evidence that the effect of argument quality on attitudes was mediated at least in part by the thoughts low-prejudiced individuals generated, we placed argument quality, thought positivity, and attitudes on a common 0–1 scale and then conducted a series of regression analyses using these rescaled measures as suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986). Combining the data from the low-prejudiced participants in Studies 1 and 2 who were exposed to the stigmatized sources, we found that argument quality had an effect on both attitudes \( b = .31, p < .01 \) and thought positivity \( b = .31, p < .01 \). In addition, thought positivity was related to attitudes \( b = .45, p < .01 \). When argument quality and thought positivity were simultaneously placed in the model, the effect of argument quality on attitudes was reduced \( b = .20, p < .01 \), and this decrease was significant, \( r(1, 73) = 3.64, p < .01 \) (Sobel, 1982). Thus, it appears that the effect of argument quality on attitudes was mediated at least in part by the thoughts low-prejudiced individuals generated when the message was presented by a stigmatized source.

The results across our studies help to render four previously plausible explanations for why people process messages from stigmatized groups more than nonstigmatized groups less likely. These theories held either that the most prejudiced individuals in society would show the enhanced processing effect (i.e., aversive racism and trustworthiness accounts) or that high negative reactions to the stigmatized group combined with high positive reactions to the group would invoke processing (i.e., ambivalence—response amplification and ambivalence reduction accounts). None of these explanations appear to explain the data obtained. Rather, the fact that it was the least prejudiced individuals who demonstrated the most processing of stigmatized sources is consistent with the watchdog hypothesis that we derived from current work on the motivational goals of individuals who are low in prejudice (Devine et al., 1991; Monteith, 1993).

Specifically, Monteith (1993) has suggested that low-prejudiced individuals are motivated to avoid being prejudiced and that they process information diligently in interracial situations as one way of achieving that goal. Consistent with the idea that low-prejudiced individuals have a chronic motivation to control their prejudice, Fazio and colleagues found that the MRS was correlated with a scale they developed to assess motivation to control prejudiced responses toward African Americans (i.e., low prejudice on the MRS was associated with high motivation to control prejudice; see Dunton & Fazio, 1997). Monteith (1993) found that low-prejudiced individuals pay greater attention to information relevant to avoiding a prejudiced response and take more time to form responses toward a stigmatized individual when they have just violated their nonprejudiced self-standards. Specifically, she found that low-prejudiced heterosexuals who had been induced to believe they had behaved more prejudicially toward homosexuals than their nonprejudiced standards allow (a) paid more attention to information regarding how to avoid prejudicial responses (as measured by reading time and free recall) and (b) engaged in greater cognitive processing (as measured by response time) when generating responses towards homosexuals that potentially could be prejudiced, compared with when they had not experienced a discrepancy with self-standards. The increased processing of persuasive messages from stigmatized others could be part of low-prejudiced individuals’ chronic attempts (i.e., nondiscrepancy induced) to be unprejudiced and to prevent themselves from discriminating against stigmatized sources.

In addition to processing in order to control one’s own level of (undesired) prejudice, there is a second possibility for why majority group members who are low in prejudice engage in increased thinking about information from stigmatized sources. Specifically, low-prejudiced individuals might be especially aware that others in society do not share their unprejudiced beliefs and thus might carefully scrutinize the actions of stigmatized others in an effort to prevent other people from discriminating. That is, low-prejudiced majority group members might be motivated to be vigilant in situations involving stigmatized individuals for fear that high-prejudiced majority group members might not treat the stigmatized individual fairly. For example, low-prejudiced individuals might fear that others would unfairly reject a persuasive message from a stigmatized source on any topic. If so, they would process the message carefully themselves in order to make sure that the source and his or her position are judged on the basis of merit (i.e., message contents) rather than prejudice (i.e., source’s stigma). Such processing could occur either because low-prejudiced recipients perceive that the source will experience negative consequences if he (and thus his message) is treated unfairly by others (e.g., he will be perceived as an ineffective communicator or he will get fired as an editor) or because engaging in greater scrutiny of information associated with stigmatized others has become habitual with practice and thus will occur even if no immediate consequences are perceived for the source, as in the current research (Smith, Stewart, & Buttram, 1992).

It is important to note that there are several possible ways for either oneself or others to treat stigmatized individuals unfairly and thus various manifestations of discrimination for which to watch. Perhaps the most obvious way to treat stigmatized individuals unfairly is to base a judgment of their position or message on felt negativity toward their group rather than on the merits of their position (i.e., unfair rejection). However, another more subtle way to treat stigmatized individuals unfairly is by dismissing or ignor-

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11 Supporters of the aversive racism framework might argue that even the low-prejudiced individuals in our sample were sufficiently prejudiced (or racist) to engage in enhanced processing of stigmatized sources. There are two problems with this view, however. First, recall that in Experiment 1, the most prejudiced individuals engaged in the least processing of information from the stigmatized source. Thus, at best, the aversive racism hypothesis would have to be modified to predict that people moderate in prejudice engage in the most processing. This assumes that the individuals that we have characterized as low in prejudice are actually moderate on some absolute racism scale. However, even this explanation is problematic because the assumption of aversive racism theory is that individuals process stigmatized sources more in order to find some justification for their prejudice. When such justification is found (e.g., weak arguments), they can express their prejudice, but when such justification is not found, they would presumably be similar in their reactions to stigmatized and nonstigmatized sources. Thus, aversive racists should never respond more positively to a stigmatized than a nonstigmatized individual. However, for the low-prejudiced individuals in the strong argument conditions in both Experiments 1 and 2, attitudes and thoughts were more positive in response to the stigmatized than nonstigmatized source, and simple effects tests revealed this increase to be significant in three of the four relevant comparisons (the exception being the thought positivity measure in Experiment 2).
ing communications from them without a careful enough hearing (i.e., unfair dismissal). Engaging in enhanced processing of what stigmatized others say corrects for both types of possible unfairness because effortful processing presumably ensures that judgments will be made on the basis of merit. Of course, one’s attempt to avoid unfairness does not ensure that one will actually be fair, because biases can color processing of persuasive messages without the person’s awareness (Chaiken et al., 1989; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986b).

In sum, there are two kinds of watchdog roles that low-prejudiced individuals might assume. One is to watch out for their own possible prejudice (e.g., Devine et al., 1991; Monteith, 1993), but the other is to watch out for possible prejudice on the part of others. Either kind of watchdog motivation would result in increased scrutiny of the actions of stigmatized others. Increased watchdog processing is viewed as an attempt by low-prejudiced majority group individuals to reduce unfair actions or judgments enacted by themselves or by other majority group members.12 Ironically, when a stigmatized source presents weak message arguments, a low-prejudiced individual might sometimes be less accepting of the conclusion than a high-prejudiced person because the low-prejudiced person realizes how weak the message is.

Future Research

Each type of watchdog motivation might operate in different low-prejudiced individuals or might operate to some degree within any given individual. Furthermore, these motivations might operate differently for different stigmatized groups or at different points in the history of a stigmatized group or of an individual. For example, people might first become motivated to watch out for their own prejudice but then become concerned about the prejudice of others. Whether the different watchdog motivations are separable, operate in different situations, or for different stigmatized groups, or for different subgroups of low-prejudiced individuals is a reasonable topic for future research.

In addition, several potential moderators determining when either kind of watchdog processing will occur seem plausible. For both types of watchdog motivation, the stigma should be salient. That is, people have to notice that they are interacting with a stigmatized individual against whom prejudice or discrimination is possible before increased processing will occur. In addition, Devine and Monteith (1993; Monteith, 1993) have suggested that low-prejudiced individuals will watch out for their own prejudice to the extent that they (a) have established and internalized a nonprejudiced self-identity, but are still personally experiencing responses that are inconsistent with that identity; (b) have noticed that they are responding more prejudicially than their personal standards allow; and (c) have not used alternative methods of reaffirming their nonprejudiced self-identities following discrepancy experiences. Future research should examine which conditions lead individuals to engage in greater information scrutiny in order to watch out for their own prejudice.

As suggested previously, low-prejudiced individuals’ concern that others might act or judge in an unfair manner could also enhance scrutiny of the acts of stigmatized others in an attempt to be able to argue against such discrimination. Individuals should engage in watching out for others’ prejudice to the extent that they (a) have an internalized and salient nonprejudiced self-identity, and (b) perceive a stigmatized individual to be in danger of experiencing discrimination from others (perhaps based on their prior observations of discrimination). Thus, increasing either the salience of one’s personal nonprejudiced beliefs about a group (e.g., by increasing self-awareness) or the potential for others to discriminate against the source (e.g., by providing information that other potential evaluators are highly prejudiced toward the source’s group) should increase the likelihood of this second form of watchdog processing. Recall that Sheppard and Bodenhausen (1993) found that women processed a message from a homosexual source more than a heterosexual source only when they were told that they would later have to give an account of their reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with the advocated position. It is possible that telling participants they would publicly have to explain their reactions may have increased the extent to which they were aware of the possibility of themselves or others discriminating against the source.

In addition to these questions regarding the nature and antecedents of low-prejudiced individuals’ motivation to scrutinize information associated with stigmatized others, further research is needed to understand the processing tendencies of individuals who are high in prejudice. Experiment 1 found that high-prejudiced individuals showed the opposite processing tendency of low-prejudiced individuals; that is, they processed the message by the White source more than the Black source. It is possible that high-prejudiced individuals not only lack the motivation to scrutinize information by stigmatized sources but also are more motivated to process information by either an in-group (Mackie, Gastardo-Conaco, & Skelly, 1992; Mackie, Worth, & Asuncion, 1990) or a nonstigmatized source. Consistent with this idea, a significant two-way interaction of Argument Quality × Prejudice Level for the White source conditions in Study 1, F(1, 112) = 4.37, p < .04, suggested that high-prejudiced Whites think more about information by a White source than do low-prejudiced individuals. This could be because high-prejudiced individuals are more identified with their in-group than are low-prejudiced individuals (see Fleming & Petty, in press, for a review of work on identity and persuasion). In fact, recent evidence suggests that there is a positive relationship between prejudice against an out-group and identification with one’s in-group (e.g., Blascovich, Wyer, Swart, & Kibler, 1997; Masson & Verkuyten, 1993). However, Study 1 did not include a race-unspecified control group and so no inferences about absolute processing tendencies can be made. Thus, it remains unclear whether high-prejudiced Whites in this study were evidencing increased processing of information by a White source, decreased processing of information by a Black source, or both. Future efforts to replicate these effects with the

12 It is interesting that these conditions do not necessitate that one be a majority group member to engage in watchdog processing. Individuals of stigmatized groups themselves could be motivated to prevent others in their group from being discriminated against (and thus show increased processing of messages from members of their own group), or may have culturally learned internalized negativity toward their own group (i.e., self-hatred, e.g., Allport, 1954) that they are vigilant to overcome.
inclusion of no-source controls will help answer these questions.

Finally, the research presented here does not exhaust the possible effects of source stigma on persuasion processes. Rather, this line of inquiry addresses explanations regarding why source stigma serves to influence the extent of thinking. Source variables (as other variables) are most likely to affect message processing when thinking is not constrained to be high or low by other variables in the persuasion context. If thinking is constrained by other variables, the ELM holds that other roles are possible. Specifically, a stigmatized source can (a) act as a peripheral cue under low elaboration likelihood conditions, (b) bias ongoing thinking about information under high elaboration likelihood conditions, and (c) act as a persuasive argument under high elaboration likelihood conditions (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986b; Petty & Wegener, in press).

In conclusion, this research provides an advance in our understanding of why associating a message with a stigmatized source serves to increase the extent of thinking that majority group recipients do. It appears to result from the efforts of low-prejudiced individuals to watch out for their own or others' prejudice. The second type of watchdog motivation for the increased processing—watching out for the prejudice of others—adds a new theoretical possibility in the area of intergroup attitudes. Specifically, the suggestion of a motivation among majority group members to watch out for others' prejudice broadens the range of theoretically possible intergroup attitudes and behavioral motivations from ultimately self-serving motivations dominated by negativity or the avoidance of negativity toward a stigmatized group (and thus preservation of one's egalitarian self-image or avoidance of negative self-directed affect) to include a motivation in the interest of protecting and thus reducing the distress of an unrelated stigmatized other. Previous theories of prejudice (i.e., intergroup attitudes) do not typically allow for the possibility of an altruistic motivation underlying the behavior of majority group individuals in their interactions with stigmatized individuals. Investigations of whether such motivations exist and when and how they operate would increase our understanding of human nature.

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