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The role of social norm clarity in the influenced expression of prejudice over time

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Abstract

Social influence has been shown to be a powerful, but underexamined, tool in altering prejudice-related attitudes. Most notably, hearing one person condemn or condone discrimination can influence another person to do the same (Blanchard, Crandall, Brigham, & Vaughn, 1994). The current study assesses a potential underlying mechanism that may determine the extent to which participants are socially influenced to alter their prejudice-related beliefs: the *clarity of the social norm* regarding the expression of prejudice. In addition, the study assesses longer-term effects of social influence (see Stangor, Sechrist, & Jost, 2001). Results from 270 participants revealed that the extent of social influence was predicted by the clarity of the social norm for displaying prejudice and that participants were influenced both immediately and one month later by others' opinions. We discuss the theoretical implications of the finding that one person can produce lasting change in another person's prejudice-related belief system.

Keywords: Social norms; Prejudice; Social influence; Long-term influence

> "We are chameleons, and our partialities and prejudices change place with an easy and blessed facility, and we are soon wonted to the change and happy in it."
>
> - Mark Twain (as quoted by Harnsberger, 1948)

A great deal of past research has targeted both societal and individual-level strategies that change people's attitudes toward certain stigmatized groups. Indeed, one of the most well studied topics in social psychology is prejudice, and a main thrust of this research has centered on attempts to reduce or eradicate people's prejudices (e.g., Allport, 1954; Lowery, Hardin, & Sinclair, 2001; Oskamp, 2000; Rudman, Ashmore, & Gary, 2001; Stangor et al., 2001; Wittenbrink, Judd, & Park, 2001). One particular way in which prejudice may be altered is through social influence. For instance, Blanchard et al. (1994) examined whether one person could influence another to hold more or less prejudice toward members of a stigmatized group. They concluded that social influence can be extremely effective in changing people's prejudice-related attitudes about members of stigmatized groups, both in favorable and unfavorable ways.

While such findings offer profound opportunities for reducing the extent to which individuals hold prejudice-related attitudes, there are some remaining issues to this method of prejudice reduction, which the current research attempts to address. First, the current research identifies a mechanism underlying stigma—the clarity of social norms regarding the display of prejudice against various groups—that we believe predicts how influenced individuals will be to change their attitudes. Second, it is unclear whether such social influence attempts last beyond initial periods of time. While a sizable body of research has measured attitudes immediately following influence attempts, little research has addressed longer-term changes. The current research

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will examine whether such attempts provide only initial compliance in response to normative pressure or whether attitude change may be more long-term. We begin by discussing the relevant previous research.

Previous research on changing prejudice-related attitudes through social influence

A vast amount of social psychological research has focused on ways to reduce prejudice (for a review, see Oskamp, 2000), but surprisingly little has focused on the use of social influence. Certainly, research has shown that people's prejudice-related attitudes are influenced by social norms. For example, attitudes favoring racial equality have improved dramatically over the years in the US (Case & Greeley, 1990). In 1949, no white college students sampled were "willing to admit Blacks to close kinship by marriage," but in 1992, 74% indicated such willingness (Dovidio, Brigham, Johnson, & Gaertner, 1996). Such increases in the reports of favorable attitudes have been interpreted as a result of conformity to the shifting social norms (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1986; Pettigrew, 1991; Rokeach & Ball-Rokeach, 1989).

A smaller body of research has shown that people are not only influenced by a set societal norm, but that even the opinion of a single individual can influence another's prejudice-related attitudes. For example, in a study by Blanchard et al. (1994), participants overheard a confederate, acting as another participant, give ratings to a survey about how the university should respond to incidents of racism (see also Blanchard, Lilly, & Vaughn, 1991). If the confederate gave responses that condemned racism, the participants similarly condemned racism, and if the confederates gave responses that condoned racism, the participants also did likewise. In a replication study, Monteith, Deneen, and Tooman (1996) found similar results for discrimination against both Black individuals (Study 2) and Gay men (Study 1). However, they found that participants were only able to be influenced to give less prejudiced responses, not more prejudiced responses, after hearing the views of someone else. They proposed that the participants in their study could not be influenced to be more prejudiced because of a strong anti-prejudice norm in society.

The sum of this research provides important preliminary information about the ways in which prejudice may or may not be altered through social influence. One limitation of this previous research is that the studies of both Blanchard et al. (1994, 1991) and Monteith et al. (1996, Study 2) focused mainly on racism against Black people, a group for whom there is currently a strong norm opposing prejudice. While Monteith et al. additionally examined responses toward Gay men (Study 2), the stigma of homosexuality is becoming one in which substantial social norms oppose the overt expression of prejudice (e.g., Donovan, 2001; Hebl, Foster, Mannix, & Dovidio, 2002). For instance, a recent Gallup Poll (2003) revealed that 60% of American adults believe that homosexual relations should be legal, as opposed to just 32% who thought so in 1986 (and 47% who thought so in 1996 when the Monteith et al. study was published). Similarly, 88% of American adults now believe that Gay men and Lesbians should be given equal rights in job opportunities, as opposed to just 59% who thought so in 1982 (Gallup, 2003).

Given that this past research has predominantly focused on stigmas that either have moderately clear norms guiding the expression of prejudice (i.e., Gay men and Lesbians) or exceptionally clear norms (i.e., Black individuals), it is important to consider the possibility that social influence attempts focused on stigmatized groups with more ambiguous norms might result in even greater attitude changes in others. To more fully understand the relationship between social influence and prejudice, we propose that the reactions to additional stigmas must be studied. Crandall, Eshleman, and O'Brien (2002) also argued this and proposed that the social acceptability of displaying prejudice toward members of stigmatized groups justifies people's expressions of prejudice (see also Crandall & Eshleman, 2003). In concert with this, we predict that the *clarity of the social norm* regarding the acceptability of displaying prejudice is actually the mechanism by which reactions to social influence attempts occur, and the current research will test this.

Clarity of social norms

In 1941, Hadley Cantril proposed that someone is suggestible when he or she "has no standard of judgment or frame of reference adequate to interpret a given situation and wants some standard or frame of reference" (p. 65). This reasoning provides an explanation as to why people sometimes conform: when individuals do not know how to respond, they look to other people, observe how they behave, and mimic that behavior (see also Bandura, 1986; Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). In the case of attitudes toward Black individuals, there is a very clear norm, meaning that people are highly aware of the way in which they should act toward Black individuals. Crandall et al. (2002) asked participants to rate the social acceptability of prejudice against various groups using a 3-point Likert-type scale with the following anchors: (0) = "Definitely not OK to have negative feelings about this group," (1) = "Maybe it's OK to have negative feelings about this group," and (2) = "Definitely OK to have negative feelings about this group." We believe that one way to interpret such data is that the closer the mean rating of the group was to one of the endpoints of the scale, the clearer it was that prejudice was or was not acceptable. The farther away a group was from the endpoints, then the more ambiguous the societal norm was in dictating how one should feel about that group. In their sample, Crandall et al. found that the prejudice acceptability score for Black individuals was very low ($M = .12$), indicating that there was a very clear social norm dictating that individuals should not display prejudice against Black individuals.

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In an extension of Crandall's research, we predict that the more ambiguous the social norm guiding the display of prejudice toward a certain group is, the more vulnerable individuals will be to social influence attempts regarding the display of prejudice toward that group. On the one hand, this prediction is not entirely novel: the relationship between stimulus ambiguity, uncertainty, and conformity has been reviewed by Turner (1991) and dates back to some of the earliest, most prominent research studies (e.g., Allen & Wilder, 1977; Asch, 1956; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Sherif, 1936). All of these researchers found that increased ambiguity led to increased conformity. On the other hand, the relationship between ambiguity and social influence has not been applied to the domain of prejudice. If this relationship generalizes to the domain of prejudice, we anticipate that individuals will be more likely to look to someone else for the proper prejudice-related views to have about a particular group if they are uncertain about the social norm.

To test this notion concretely, we investigated a number of stigmas that vary in the normative clarity guiding the display of prejudice. We chose a total of five stigmas, four of which came from those that Crandall tested: Black individuals (who have a very clear social norm prohibiting the display of prejudice), Obese individuals (who have a moderately clear social norm prohibiting the display of prejudice, $M = .23$), Ex-convicts (who have an unclear social norm, $M = .98$), and Racists (who have a moderately clear social norm prescribing the display of prejudice, $M = 1.84$). Social influence with respect to Gay men and Lesbians has also been examined in previous research (e.g., Monteith et al., 1996); hence, we included this stigmatized group in our study too. It is less clear exactly where this group falls in terms of its normative clarity, as Crandall et al. (2002) did not measure the general category of "gay men and lesbians." Rather, they measured "gay soldiers" and "homosexuals who raise children," both of which are confounded constructs and were rated as having moderately clear social norms prohibiting the expression of prejudice.

Because the stigmas we wanted to use differed somewhat from those tested by Crandall et al. (2002), and because there are possible reasons other than an unclear norm for why responses about Ex-convicts fell in the center of their scale (e.g., people might think there is a very clear norm that they should sometimes display prejudice), we conducted a pretest in which we measured the clarity of the social norm in relation to the five items we use in our social influence study that we will present (see Appendix A). We measured participants' attitudes in relation to those five items because we believed it was possible that there might be a clear norm in one situation but not in others, and we conducted the pretest in the same subject pool as our social influence study that we present to ensure that we knew the social norms relevant to the participants. In the pretest, participants rated on a 7-point scale the extent to which they believed there was a "correct" way to respond to each of the five statements. Thus, the more they believed there was a "correct" way to respond, the clearer they thought the social norm was. We then took the mean of these five ratings as an overall social norm clarity measure. We found that participants ranked the clarity of the social norm guiding the display of prejudice against the five groups from most to least clarity as follows: Blacks ($M = 5.77$, $SD = .95$), Gays ($M = 4.95$, $SD = 1.02$), the Obese ($M = 4.76$, $SD = 1.37$), Racists ($M = 4.31$, $SD = 1.20$), and Ex-convicts ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 1.31$).[2]

In essence, then, we predict that those participants hearing another person's attitudes about Ex-convicts will be significantly more influenced than those hearing attitudes about Black individuals. Our rationale involves the fact that the social norm for displaying prejudice against Ex-convicts is ambiguous; hence, we anticipate that people will be less likely to have a frame of reference that tells them how to respond. Consequently, they may be more likely to take on the views of others. Studies have shown that "the more uncertain the individual is about the correctness of his [her] judgment, the more likely he [she] is to be susceptible to social influences in making his [her] judgment" (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955, p. 634). In addition to clarifying the mechanism potentially underlying the effects of social influence on prejudice-related attitude change, we are also interested in examining the length of time for which social influence effects last.

Short-term versus long-term social influence

Hearing others state their views aloud has reliably been shown to influence participants to give similar views, particularly if participants are asked to respond immediately (e.g., Asch, 1951; Latané, 1981). However, it is not necessarily the case that the targets of such influence attempts internalize these changes. That is, in previous research on prejudice and social influence (e.g., Blanchard et al., 1994, 1991; Monteith et al., 1996), it is very possible that no long-term attitude change occurred and people were merely complying to be socially desirable. To better understand how social influence might have differentially lasting

[2] In addition to pretesting the clarity of the social norm, we also pretested ratings of social acceptability of displaying prejudice to make sure that the two were not completely confounded. Participants read each of the five items in Appendix A and rated on a 7-point scale the extent to which they believed that it was okay for someone to say that he or she agrees with the statement. We then took the mean of these five ratings as a social acceptability measure. We found that participants ranked the groups from least to most social acceptability as follows: Gays ($M = 2.60$, $SD = 1.10$), Blacks ($M = 2.97$, $SD = .95$), the Obese ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.03$), Ex-convicts ($M = 3.77$, $SD = .68$), Racists ($M = 4.23$, $SD = .73$). Although as the social acceptability of displaying prejudice increases, social norm clarity generally decreases, the two orderings do not match up exactly. One exception is for Racists, and Ex-convicts. It is more socially acceptable to display prejudice against Racists and there is also a clearer norm guiding the display of prejudice. The difference between the ratings for Racists and Ex-convicts was significant for the social norm clarity measure, $t(102) = 2.04$, $p = .04$, although it was not for the social acceptability measure, $t(102) = 1.58$, $p = .12$.

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effects, we review two general types of social influence, each of which tends to have a very different level of long-term attitudinal internalization.

The first type, *normative social influence*, occurs when people conform to group norms with the goal of being accepted and liked by others, and of simply doing what others expect of them (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Pettigrew, 1991). When people act in accordance with normative social influence, they may publicly comply with the normative standards but not necessarily privately accept or endorse them (Campbell & Fairey, 1989). The second type of social influence is *informational social influence*, which occurs when people use others as a source of accurate information and then conform to the views held by others (Campbell & Fairey, 1989; Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). Informational social influence is much more likely than is normative social influence to lead to private acceptance and longer-term changes (Campbell & Fairey, 1989; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Kaplan & Miller, 1987; Nail, 1986). Accordingly, then, in the current study, if only normative social influence were operating, long-term change in participants would not be anticipated as readily as would be the case if informational social influence were also operating.

A recent study by Stangor et al. (2001) examined both short- and long-term social influence. In Experiment 1, participants endorsed various stereotypes of Blacks and then were provided with information about the views of the majority of students at their university. The participants who were told that other students generally had more favorable stereotypes of Blacks than they had originally estimated increased the favorability of their own stereotypes. Likewise, when told that most students had more negative views, participants generally decreased the favorability of their stereotypes. In Experiment 2, Stangor et al. showed that attitude change both revealed "longer-lasting" effects of up to one week and generalized to ratings on closely related but novel measures. Although Stangor et al. (2001) interpreted their results partly as evidence of change via normative social influence, they also proposed that informational social influence was at work because "the attitude change lasted for a week and seemed to have represented more than just "differential needs to gain approval from the ingroup" (p. 493). In the current study, we will assess long-term change triggered by these forms of social influence. Like Stangor et al., we anticipate that normative and informational social influence may combine to produce changes in attitudes. While we do not formally test the type of social influence, we do believe a basic understanding of these processes enlightens the reader to the mechanisms by which attitude change may occur.

The current research and formal hypotheses

The current investigation is a novel attempt to (a) examine the effects of social influence on both condemning and condoning discrimination, (b) examine the differences that arise due to varying levels of the clarity of the social norm regarding the display of prejudice, and (c) examine the duration of normative and/or informational social influence. In our study, participants hear a confederate (a) condemn, (b) condone, or (c) give no opinions (control condition) about discrimination toward one of five groups of people (Black individuals, Gay individuals, Obese individuals, Racists, and Ex-convicts), which vary in social norm clarity regarding the display of prejudice. Immediately following the confederate's responses, which we refer to as "Time One," participants will be asked to give their own prejudice-related responses about the same group. About one month following this encounter, which we refer to as "Time Two," participants will be contacted again (via e-mail) and asked to give their responses to both the original and novel items, the latter of which were intended to examine whether the social influence effect would show up in items never before encountered (see Holzhausen & McGlynn, 2001; Stangor et al., 2001).

At Time One, we anticipate a main effect for Stigma given that the groups we chose vary in the social acceptability of displaying prejudice. Similarly, we anticipate a main effect for Social Influence, such that hearing confederates condemn discrimination will result in participants condemning discrimination more than if they hear a confederate say nothing, and much more than if they hear a confederate condone discrimination. Importantly, and most central to our study, we anticipate a significant interaction, which will be tested by an interaction contrast, such that the extent of social influence that participants experience will be strengthened as the social norm for displaying prejudice becomes more ambiguous.

At Time Two, we anticipate that if a deeper social influence process is operating than just the participants feeling pressured to respond like the confederates, these same patterns will emerge on follow-up responses. We do anticipate, however, that the follow-up responses may be weakened in the strength of their effect given both the very brief social influence encounter that participants originally experience and also the passage of time.

Methods

Participants

The current study involved only female participants and confederates in order to eliminate the possibility that status differences between the genders might complicate social influence processes (see Ridgeway & Diekema, 1992). A total of 293 women at a southern university participated in the initial part of this study. Data from 23 of these participants were not used in the analyses because of problems that emerged in their trials (e.g., the participant answered before the confederate, the experimenter or confederate made a mistake, participants expressed suspicion after the study ended, etc.). Hence, the primary analyses are based upon 270 participants. A total of 206 of these 270 partici-

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pants also completed a follow-up survey. Participants ranged from 18 to 59 years of age, although 90% of the participants were 30 years of age or younger.

Procedure

Using a methodology similar to that used by Blanchard et al. (1994), one of eleven female experimenters approached individual women on campus and asked them if they would be willing to complete a brief psychology study. If the participant agreed to take part, one of ten different confederates who posed as a student just coincidentally passing by also volunteered to participate in the study shortly thereafter. Both "participants" read and signed an informed consent, gave their e-mail addresses for potential future correspondence, and completed an initial demographics questionnaire.

The experimenter read statements from one of five different surveys pertaining to individuals who are Black, Gay, Obese, Ex-convicts, or Racists. The survey contained five statements similar to those used in the Blanchard et al. (1994) study about discrimination against Black people, but the items were modified so that they could apply to all five groups (see Appendix A). Participants indicated their agreement aloud with the statements on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). In the condemn discrimination and condone discrimination conditions, the experimenter, ostensibly at random, selected the confederate to answer first and the actual participant to answer second. Depending on the condition, the confederate responded in one of three predetermined ways. In the two experimental conditions, the confederate gave responses that either condemned or condoned discrimination by indicating "1, strongly disagree" or "7, strongly agree" to the statements in Appendix A. In the control condition, the confederate wrote down her responses while the participant answered aloud, under the cover story guise that this procedure would make it easier for the experimenter to keep track of all of the responses. A reliability analysis conducted on participants' responses to the five items from the attitudinal survey revealed a high degree of consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .80). Additionally, a Principal Components Factor Analysis revealed a one-factor solution (Eigenvalue = 2.81; percent of variance accounted for = 56.1%). The mean of the five items from the attitudinal survey was used to form a "Reactions to Discrimination" composite score that was assessed immediately following the confederate's responses (Time One).

Approximately one month after the participants had taken part in the study (Time Two), the participants were contacted via e-mail and asked to respond to a seven-item "follow-up questionnaire". This questionnaire contained the five original items assessed in the attitudinal survey at Time One. Participants were asked to respond as to how they felt at present, not how they recalled feeling at the time of the original encounter. The five items from Time One were maintained as a separate "Reactions to Discrimination at Time Two" composite, so that we could directly compare both short- and longer-term influence. Finally, after the follow-up email responses were received, the participants were sent an email debriefing them and thanking them for their participation.

Results

Reactions to discrimination at Time One

A 3 (Social Influence: Condone Discrimination, Condemn Discrimination, Control) × 5 (Stigma: Black individuals, Gay individuals, Obese individuals, Racists, Ex-convicts) ANOVA with age as a covariate revealed two significant main effects. As expected, there was a main effect of Social Influence, $F(2,254) = 80.38$, $p < .001$. Planned comparisons revealed that participants displayed significantly more prejudice in the condone discrimination condition ($M = 3.87$) than in the control condition ($M = 3.14$), $F(1,254) = 27.48$, $p < .001$. They also displayed significantly more prejudice in the control condition than in the condemn discrimination condition ($M = 2.01$), $F(1,254) = 53.55$, $p < .001$. Also as expected, a Stigma main effect emerged, $F(4,254) = 33.57$, $p < .001$, revealing that the overall amount of prejudice displayed differed by group. Looking at the data, one can see that the responses toward Blacks, Gays, and the Obese form one cluster and the responses toward Ex-convicts and Racists form another. Thus, analyses will look at the comparison of the responses toward those who are Black, Gay, and Obese with responses toward those who are Ex-convicts and Racists. Based on the pretest, the social norm regarding the display of prejudice is clearer for the three stigmas in the former group, $L = 7.48$, $t(102) = 5.16$, $p < .001$, and thus, we expect a weaker social influence effect for this group.

The 3×5 ANOVA also revealed a significant interaction, $F(8,254) = 2.00$, $p < .05$. The pattern of attitude change that emerged across each of the individual social influence conditions and target groups is relatively consistent. That is, with all target groups, the least amount of prejudice was displayed in the condemn discrimination condition, followed by the control condition, while the most prejudice was displayed in the condone discrimination condition. Exceptions to this rule emerged with the prejudice displayed toward Blacks and Racists, in which there were not significant differences between the control and condone discrimination conditions. That is, although the means were in the predicted directions, participants were not influenced to display significantly more prejudice toward Black and Racist individuals even when the confederate modeled discriminating beliefs. Table 1 reveals the means, standard deviations, cell sizes, and the significant differences between conditions.

An interaction contrast comparing the difference between the condemn and condone discrimination conditions for Blacks, Gays, and Obese individuals versus Ex-convicts and Racists was statistically significant, $L = 4.48$,

Table 1
Mean, standard deviation, and cell size of the reactions to discrimination at Time One by group

Group	Social influence condition		
	Condemn discrimination mean (*SD*)	Control mean (*SD*)	Condone discrimination mean (*SD*)
Blacks	1.50_a (.41) ($n = 20$)	2.46_b (.75) ($n = 17$)	2.72_b (1.22) ($n = 17$)
Gay	1.54_a (.40) ($n = 19$)	2.45_b (.95) ($n = 17$)	3.08_c (1.18) ($n = 20$)
Obese	1.96_a (.64) ($n = 21$)	2.71_b (.68) ($n = 17$)	3.86_c (1.41) ($n = 17$)
Ex-convicts	2.49_a (1.04) ($n = 20$)	3.96_b (1.06) ($n = 19$)	5.29_c (.91) ($n = 18$)
Racists	2.73_a (1.28) ($n = 15$)	4.00_b (.77) ($n = 18$)	4.53_b (1.51) ($n = 15$)

Note: Planned comparisons were used to find significant differences. For each row, means with different subscripts significantly differ.

$F(1, 254) = 6.06$, $p = .01$. Thus, this supports our hypothesis that there is a larger social influence effect when the social norm is less clear. However, these groups also differ in the social acceptability of displaying prejudice with it being less socially acceptable to display prejudice against Blacks, Gays, or Obese individuals than it is to display prejudice against Ex-convicts or Racists. This difference in social acceptability was shown by the results of a question in our pretest and a comparison of the amount of prejudice displayed against Blacks, Gays, and the Obese versus the amount displayed against Ex-convicts and Racists in the control condition that showed a significant difference between these two sets of groups, $F(1, 254) = 45.54$, $p < .001$. Thus, we also looked at an interaction contrast comparing the responses about Ex-convicts and Racists because it is not more socially acceptable to display prejudice against Ex-convicts than Racists (based on the pretest and the results in the control condition), but the social norm for displaying prejudice against Racists is clearer (based on the pretest). We found the predicted result that the social influence effect for Ex-convicts was larger than it was for Racists, $L = .96$, $F(1, 254) = 4.27$, $p = .04$.

Exploratory analysis

As a further test of our hypothesis, we examined the correlation between the social influence effect (the difference between the mean of the condemn and condone discrimination conditions) and the rating of the clarity of the social norm from our pretest. The correlation was extremely large, $r = -.94$, providing further evidence that as the clarity of the norm decreases, the ease with which people's attitudes can be altered increases.

Reactions to discrimination at Time Two

A 3 (Social Influence: Condone Discrimination, Condemn Discrimination, Control) × 5 (Stigma: Blacks, Gays, Obese, Racists, Ex-convicts) ANOVA with age as a covariate conducted on the responses given via email approximately one month following the initial experiment again revealed significant main effects for Social Influence, $F(2, 190)$=4.04, $p = .02$, and Stigma, $F(4, 190)$=20.41, p<.001. Planned comparisons on the Social Influence conditions revealed that participants displayed significantly more prejudice in the condone discrimination condition ($M = 3.42$) than in the condemn discrimination condition ($M = 2.89$), $F(1, 190) = 8.08$, $p < .01$. Neither was significantly different from the control condition ($M = 3.21$).

The 3×5 ANOVA did not reveal a significant interaction, $F(8, 190) = 1.50$, $p = .16$, but we also conducted a more direct test of our hypothesis (as we did earlier with the Time One data). That is, using an interaction contrast, we examined whether there was a difference in the social influence effect for responses toward the two clusters that we examined. Contrary to our hypothesis, there was no difference when comparing the social influence effect for responses toward Blacks, Gays, and the Obese to the social influence effect for responses toward Racists and Ex-convicts, $L = .247$, $F(1, 190) < 1$. Table 2 reveals the means, standard deviations, and cell sizes. Looking at the data in the table, it appears that the participants in the condemn discrimination condition responding about Racists showed no evidence of a long-term social influence effect (they look more like participants in the condone discrimination condition). However, an interaction contrast comparing the

Table 2
Mean, standard deviation, and cell size of the reactions to discrimination at Time Two by group

Group	Social influence condition		
	Condemn discrimination mean (*SD*)	Control mean (*SD*)	Condone discrimination mean (*SD*)
Blacks	2.40_a (.87) ($n = 16$)	2.63_a (.80) ($n = 14$)	2.17_a (.58) ($n = 12$)
Gay	2.22_{ab} (.70) ($n = 13$)	2.93_b (.84) ($n = 11$)	3.00_{bc} (1.21) ($n = 16$)
Obese	2.34_{ab} (.84) ($n = 18$)	3.00_b (.98) ($n = 12$)	3.28_{bc} (1.50) ($n = 15$)
Ex-convicts	3.54_a (1.57) ($n = 16$)	3.58_a (1.00) ($n = 13$)	4.52_b (.82) ($n = 12$)
Racists	4.25_a (1.06) ($n = 12$)	3.86_a (.77) ($n = 14$)	4.33_a (1.50) ($n = 12$)

Note: Planned comparisons were used to find significant differences. For each row, means with different subscripts significantly differ. Additionally, the condemn and control conditions for the responses about Obese individuals differ marginally at the .1 level.

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social influence effect for responses toward the group with the least social norm clarity (Ex-convicts) to the social influence effect for the responses toward the group with the most social norm clarity (Blacks) was significant, $L = 1.23$, $F(1, 190) = 4.56$, $p = .03$. Thus, although the responses about Racists are not consistent with our hypotheses, the difference in the long-term social influence effect for responses about Ex-convicts and Black individuals is in line with our predictions.[3]

Exploratory analysis

As with the Time One data, we examined the correlation between the social influence effect (the difference between the mean of the condemn and condone discrimination conditions) and the rating of the clarity of the social norm from our pretest. The correlation was modest, $r = -.60$. However, when the scores pertaining to the responses about Racists, which seemed least in line with our predictions, were removed from this correlation, the correlation increased to $r = -.80$, providing some evidence that as the clarity of the norm decreases, the ease with which people's attitudes can be altered increases.

Discussion

In the first known attempt to combine research on the effects of social influence on condemning and condoning discrimination, the differences that arise due to varying levels of social norm clarity for displaying prejudice, and the duration that the social influence lasts, the current study revealed two important findings. First, the results identified a mechanism—the clarity of the social norm guiding the display of prejudice—by which the extent of influence could be predicted. We found that as the social norm became more ambiguous, participants were more likely to be influenced by the confederate, particularly when responding right after the confederate. Second, the study showed that social influence attempts not only induce change in prejudice-related attitudes immediately but also induce change up to one month later. While these longer-term influence effects are not as strong as they were initially, the fact that they manifest themselves at all is extremely impressive. We will now discuss our findings in more detail.

Our results show that participants were more likely to favor and oppose discrimination immediately after hearing someone else do so first. This finding is consistent with the predictions of a general social influence pattern (e.g., Cialdini & Trost, 1998) and with Blanchard et al.'s (1994) earlier research. In the current study, there were greater effects of social influence when the social norm regarding the display of prejudice was ambiguous as opposed to when it was clear. At Time One, this was shown by the significant interaction from the ANOVA, as well as by the interaction contrast revealing that the difference between the condemn discrimination and condone discrimination conditions was significantly greater for responses about Ex-convicts and Racists than for responses about Black, Gay, and Obese individuals. These results are consistent with past theories proposing that people are more suggestible when they are guided by ambiguous norms (Campbell & Fairey, 1989; Cantril, 1941; see also Turner, 1991), but these are the first set of known results that extend to the domain of prejudice. When the participants were faced with answering a survey about Ex-convicts, the ambiguous social norm did not provide much information to them about the proper way to respond, and so they looked to the confederates to provide that information. When responding to the survey about Black people, however, the participants, guided by the clear social norm, already knew how to respond, and did not take as much from the confederates' views and, in fact, were only significantly influenced to condemn discrimination more. Surprisingly, participants were also not influenced to condone discrimination toward Racists significantly more than in the control condition. It is possible that the social influence items did not make as much sense to participants when they were about Racists (i.e., they were asked to consider discriminating against discriminators) as they did when they were about other stigmatized group members, thus leading to an unpredicted pattern of results.

Our results also importantly reveal that very brief situations can impact people's views over time. In one of the only known studies examining the "lasting effects" of stigma-related processes, Stangor et al. (2001) found evidence that social influence based on learning the majority group's view lasted up to one week. Our findings extend this by showing that a single, brief social encounter produces attitude change that emerges in measures taken up to one month post-encounter. If overhearing an unknown person simply answering a survey can affect a person's answers one month later, the impact that longer or repeated interactions may have on a person could be enormous. Clearly the

[3] To eliminate the possibility that long-term responses were being driven solely by participants' desire to give the exact same answers on items to which they had previously responded, we asked all participants to rate two additional, novel statements at Time Two. These statements included: "People should have the same opportunities regardless of [their race, their sexual orientation, their weight, their past felony convictions, whether they are racist]", and "Efforts to reduce prejudice toward [Blacks, Gays, Obese people, Ex-convicts, Racists] would represent praiseworthy attempts to achieve important goals." A 3 (Social Influence: Condone Discrimination, Condemn Discrimination, Control) × 5 (Stigma: Blacks, Gays, Obese, Ex-convicts, Racists) ANOVA conducted on the average of these two responses taken approximately one month following the initial data collection revealed no significant predicted interaction, $F(8, 190) = 1.46$, $p = .18$, but did reveal significant main effects for both Social Influence, $F(2, 190) = 5.68$, $p < .01$, and Stigma, $F(4, 190) = 34.91$, $p < .001$. Planned comparisons on Social Influence revealed that participants displayed significantly more prejudice in the condone discrimination condition ($M = 3.13$) than in both the condemn discrimination condition ($M = 2.61$) and in the control condition ($M = 2.65$). The amount of prejudice displayed in the control condition and condemn discrimination condition did not significantly differ. These results eliminate the possibility that long-term effects are being driven solely by participants' desire to regurgitate answers and provide some evidence that the long-term effects extend to items that are similar in content.

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effects were not as strong at Time Two as they were at Time One, and the relationship between the social norm clarity and amount of social influence was not as obvious. The weakened significance of our Time Two results might be partially attributable to the fact that there were fewer participants at Time Two, leading to less power in our measures. Additionally, past research has suggested that the effects of social influence attenuate over time (see Latané, 1981). It is important to note, however, that a significant main effect of social influence did emerge at Time Two for both the original Reactions to Discrimination and the novel items discussed in the footnote. Given that participants only interacted with the confederate for fewer than 2 min, *any* remnant of social change is remarkable.

We cannot say for certain that the participants internalized the confederate's views or whether the effects were driven by normative social influence, informational social influence, or a combination of the two. It is possible that only normative social influence was operating and the participants were trying to gain approval from the confederate (a member of their campus and hence, somewhat of an ingroup member; see Stangor et al., 2001) by answering similarly at Time One. At Time Two, participants may have further answered in a manner consistent with their earlier responses to follow what the confederate demonstrated to be normatively appropriate. Although this may account for part of our social influence results, we suspect that informational social influence also was operating, as this type of influence is linked with long-term attitude change (Campbell & Fairey, 1989), and because we are not convinced that participants were still highly persuaded by normative pressures. First, it seems unlikely that participants would have continued to respond for the sake of gaining approval from the original confederate given that this person was no longer present at Time Two. Second, Time Two responses were collected one month following the initial data collection period, so it is conceivable that participants may have forgotten about the way that they responded or the entire experience altogether. Third, the instructions in the e-mail specifically stated that the participants should answer based on how they felt at present, so those who did happen to remember were freed from acting consistently.

It is also possible that our findings could be the result of demand characteristics in that participants responded to the survey in the way they thought the experimenter wanted them to respond. However, past research has shown that suspicious participants in conformity research usually show smaller, as opposed to larger, social influence effects (Stricker, Messick, & Jackson, 1967). We believe that some true attitude change did occur and that informational social influence was operating, although certainly, normative and informational social influence may have transpired together (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Stangor et al., 2001; Turner, 1991). Additional studies are needed to discern if both types or a single type of social influence evokes such patterns of change.

Future research might also address in more detail how the clarity of social norms impacts the degree to which a person is influenced by the prejudice-related views of another. It is possible that the clarity of social norms is only one force driving such responses. Other factors may include the differing degrees of perceived controllability of stigmas (Weiner, 1995), the extent to which stigmas are differentially perilous to others (Jones et al., 1984), the extent to which laws are enacted to protect certain stigmatized groups, and the strength of the attitudes of the person being influenced. However, these and many other differences among the stigmas are related to the various social norms. Controllability and peril of a stigma and laws protecting certain groups probably impact the social acceptability of displaying prejudice (and clarity of the norm), and a person likely has stronger attitudes when there are clear social norms.

Finally, we encourage more studies to assess how long the effects of social influence attempts last. The current research reveals that such effects last up to one month, but it is not known how long they can endure and what conditions might lead to or facilitate permanent change. If the academic year had not been so close to ending, we would have asked the participants to respond again to see if their views remain changed; however, many of their e-mail addresses and contact information would have expired before this time so we were unable to assess this.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates the powerful potential one person has to change the prejudice-related views of another. More specifically, when one person condemns or condones discrimination toward various group members, others may follow. These effects and the strength of the influences depend on the clarity of social norms. For stigmas that have ambiguous norms (e.g., Ex-convicts), our results show that individuals are particularly vulnerable to others' attitudes, while influence attempts related to stigmas that have clear norms result in much less attitude change. Thus, the results of the current study can be used to build an understanding of how to eliminate some types of prejudice over time. While this understanding has profound consequences for societal goals fostering egalitarianism, it is also important to note that our study has a downside. The current set of results also reveals that prejudice can be sustained or even enhanced by social influence processes in a way that is harmful and further debilitating to the stigmatized target. We hope, then, that future research and applications of our findings will exercise caution and focus on the use of social influence that strives to reduce, not induce, prejudice.

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Appendix A

1. People should be able tell jokes that make fun of [Blacks, Obese people, Gays, Ex-convicts, Racists].
2. Tougher laws should be enacted that help prevent discrimination against [Blacks, Obese people, Gays, Ex-convicts, Racists]. (reverse scored)
3. A club or organization on campus should be able to refuse to admit someone [based on race, based on weight, based on sexual orientation, based on past felony convictions, who is a racist].
4. People who discriminate against [Blacks, Obese people, Gays, Ex-convicts, Racists] should be punished. (reverse scored)
5. When hiring, employers should be able to discriminate [on the basis of race, on the basis of weight, on the basis of sexual orientation, on the basis of past felony convictions, against people who are racist].

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