

# 9 Training in Ethical Influence

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A while ago, one of us wrote a general readership book on the social influence process (Cialdini, 1993). The book's purpose was twofold: to inform consumers of the most powerful psychological principles that lead people to say yes to requests, and to show them how to recognize and resist these pressures when they are used in an undue or unwelcome fashion. It is perhaps ironic that besides being purchased by defensively minded consumers—its intended audience—the book has been purchased by a large number of marketers, advertisers, attorneys, fund-raisers, and managers wishing to learn how to use these principles to move people in their directions.

Of course, there is nothing necessarily objectionable about using social influence principles to move people. But, in the process, issues of ethical practice arise. That is, if we grant that identifiable principles are effective in changing compliance decisions, we must ask when it is acceptable versus objectionable to use them. Just because a given principle is successful does not mean we are ethically entitled to commission its persuasive power to create change. However, social influence researchers have focused almost entirely on the issue of effectiveness—often asking whether a tactic would work, but rarely questioning whether it should be employed in the first place.

## THE ETHICS OF INFLUENCE

After an extensive review of the social influence literature and an extended period of participant observation of the most prevalent influence practices of practitioners, Cialdini (1987a, 2000) specified a set of psychological principles that normally steer people correctly as to when to comply with a request for action: social proof (consensus), expert authority, commitment/consistency, reciprocity, scarcity, and liking.

Cialdini labeled these principles “universals of influence” and argued that they are employed regularly by influence professionals precisely because they are regularly employed by their influence targets as shortcuts to good decisions. That is, typically, it is adaptive to follow the lead of many similar others or the recommendations of an expert or the implications of one’s commitments, and so on. Cialdini also argued that, because these principles usually counsel correctly, they may be used ethically to generate influence to the extent that they exist as a natural (inherent) and representative feature of the influence situation (Cialdini, 1987b, 1996, 2000).<sup>1</sup> It is objectionable, however, for an influence agent to counterfeit or import one of these principles into a situation where it does not reside (or to exaggerate its presence there).

A pair of classic television commercials illustrates this distinction. The old Trident commercial, which stated that, “four out of five dentists surveyed recommend sugarless gum for their patients who chew gum,” used authority appropriately because the experts cited (dentists) could speak with true authority about the advantages of the product (sugarless gum). In contrast, the Sanka commercial in which Robert Young educated a coffee drinker about the dangers of caffeine and the advantages of caffeine-free Sanka used authority objectionably. The actor was no expert on caffeine, but he, nevertheless, dispensed medical advice—advice that may have misled viewers familiar with his well-known television role as Marcus Welby, MD.

Cialdini (1996) argued that an organization that employs the principles of influence unethically will bear hidden costs that can outweigh the short-term profits garnered through the unethical tactics. Despite this, many business organizations use such tactics (Grimsley, 2000). Thus, the present research focuses on the other side of the influence relationship: the target.

### EMPOWERING TARGETS TO RESIST UNETHICAL INFLUENCE

In trying to empower targets to resist unethical influence, it would be of limited help to instill stubbornness or a blanket rejection of new information. Cynicism can be as costly as gullibility. A useful program should, instead, afford recipients a rule for discriminating between messages likely to steer them right versus wrong.

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<sup>1</sup>This ethical distinction does not attempt to assert what is ethical in a general sense. Numerous additional factors go into that determination.

As McGuire (1964) put it, "Anyone can be made impervious to the most skillful propaganda if we reduce him to a catatonic schizophrenia ... [but] the best of both worlds would be to discover pretreatments that would make the person receptive to the true and resistant to the false" (p. 192).

Following McGuire's recommendation, we developed a brief (12- to 15-minute) tutorial designed to teach college students to resist one kind of unethical use of expert authority in advertising. The tutorial showed students a variety of authority-based advertisements and taught them to determine their acceptability by asking, Is the authority depicted in this ad genuinely an authority on the product he or she is promoting? A comparable sample of control students examined the ads and was asked to consider the ways in which the advertisers used tone and color.

We anticipated that students who received the tutorial would (a) be able to discriminate between ethical versus unethical uses of expert authority and (b) be likely to discriminate against the latter. If, on the other hand, the tutorial merely reminded or inspired participants to perceive that advertisers attempt to limit their choices and freedoms, such participants might demonstrate reactance against subsequent ads (Brehm, 1966). This reactance would produce a less desirable outcome: reduced persuasion for all advertising, both unethical and ethical.

If the tutorial does generate the desired effect of mobilizing resistance only against the unethical ads, an important conceptual question must be addressed: By what mechanism did this effect appear? Our favored hypothesis is that participants who received the tutorial would subsequently perceive ads containing false authorities as unduly manipulative (i.e., unfair, improper, or deceptive), and this perception of undue manipulative intent then would lead to resistance.

## EXPERIMENT 1

Two hundred forty-one Arizona State University (ASU) undergraduates participated in our first experiment. The participants were assigned randomly to either the tutorial or control conditions. After reading the six-page tutorial or corresponding control text, participants rated six authority-based ads, three ethical and three unethical, on two scales adapted from Campbell (1995). The first scale assessed the persuasiveness of the ad by using items such as, "If you were to use this type of product in the future, how likely are you to choose this brand?" The second scale assessed the perception of undue manipulative intent, asking participants to indicate how closely they agreed with statements such as, "The advertiser seemed to be trying to inappropriately manage or control the consumer audience."

As predicted, presence of the tutorial interacted significantly with type of authority with respect to ad persuasiveness,  $F(1, 224) = 24.99, p < .001$  (see Table 9.1 and Fig. 9.1). Control participants rated the ads containing false authorities as more persuasive than those containing true authorities. In contrast, participants who received the tutorial found the false authorities less convincing and the true authorities more so. These results suggest that the tutorial made participants not more generally resistant to advertising but rather more discriminating about it.

TABLE 9.1  
Cell Means and (Standard Deviations) Within Each Condition

Condition	<i>Undue manipulative intent</i>		<i>Ad persuasiveness</i>	
	<i>True authority</i>	<i>False authority</i>	<i>True authority</i>	<i>False authority</i>
Experiment 1				
Control (n = 121)	2.38 (1.07)	2.23 (0.99)	3.24 (0.88)	3.56 (0.74)
Tutorial (n = 120)	1.90 (0.97)	2.56 (0.93)	3.69 (0.89)	3.36 (0.77)
Experiment 2				
Control (n = 65)	2.28 (1.05)	2.61 (1.02)	3.25 (0.79)	3.36 (0.80)
Tutorial (n = 65)	1.98 (0.96)	2.71 (0.98)	3.67 (0.79)	3.23 (0.75)
Delayed control (n = 29)			2.68 (0.61)	2.91 (0.67)
Delayed tutorial (n = 26)			2.99 (0.77)	2.78 (0.54)
Experiment 3				
Tone/Color (n = 80)	2.42 (1.56)	2.61 (1.35)	3.31 (1.27)	3.31 (1.19)
No commentary (n = 80)	2.20 (1.19)	2.84 (1.42)	3.25 (0.92)	3.18 (0.91)
Asserted vul- nerability (n = 2.11 (1.43)	3.47 (1.33)	3.58 (1.06)	3.00 (1.02)	
Demonstrated vulnerability (n = 80)	2.14 (1.24)	3.73 (1.42)	3.66 (1.12)	2.54 (1.36)

Note. Manipulative intent and ad persuasiveness were scored on 7-point scales from 0 to 6, with larger scores indicating more of the quality. The delayed measures of ad persuasiveness were scored on a 5-point scale from 1 to 5.

This finding stands in contrast to a reactance effect and to a reactance explanation of our findings. That is, according to reactance theory, resistance occurs when something is perceived as directing or controlling one's choices, thereby limiting one's freedoms to decide. Clearly, this is as much the intent of honest as dishonest ad content. Our results indicate that the tutorial did not stimulate resistance to attempts to direct and limit choices but rather attempts to do so unduly.

The measure of perception of undue manipulative intent also displayed an interaction that paralleled ad persuasiveness,  $F(1, 230) = 36.29, p < .001$ . These re-

sults are compatible with our hypothesis that the observed resistance stems from an increased perception that unethical ads inappropriately attempt to manipulate consumers.

Interestingly, the tutorial had an unanticipated, but fortunate, side effect: Honest ads were seen as more persuasive! Thus, participants learned not only to devalue inappropriate heuristic information but also to enhance the value of appropriate messages.

Although encouraged by the initial success of our brief training program in instilling resistance to persuasion, we were concerned that the observed resistance might have stemmed not from true resistance but rather from demand characteristics. We had, after all, just told participants how to identify “good” versus “bad” ads and then asked them to rate a series of examples that fit into our criteria for

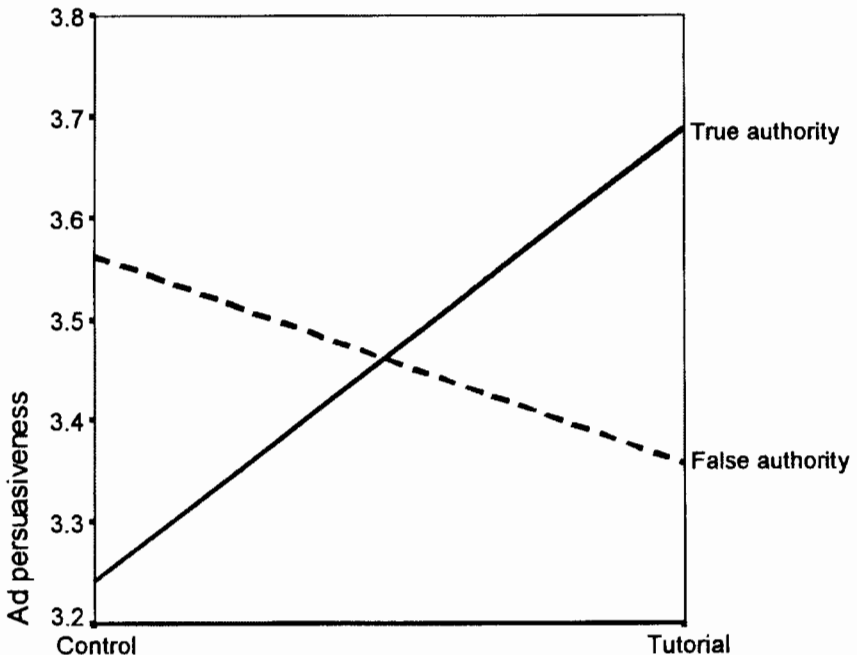


FIG. 9.1. The effects of the tutorial on the perceived persuasiveness of deceptive and nondeceptive advertisements in Experiment 1.

“good” and “bad” advertisements. In addition, for such a tutorial to be truly useful, its lessons must persevere over time and outside the context of the laboratory.

## Experiment 2

In our next experiment, participants rated ads both immediately and after a 1- to 4-day delay, in a separate setting unrelated to the laboratory context. The separation of the training and measurement contexts allowed us to assess the viability of demand characteristics as an alternative explanation for the finding of the previous experiment. The delay between the tutorial and the test of its effectiveness offered a second benefit of more applied interest: an assessment of the perseverance of the training impact. If we are to develop a useful program for instilling resistance to improper persuasive messages, the lessons of that program must be retained and accessible to participants at later times when they are likely to encounter such messages in other settings. Without evidence of the durability and cross-situational robustness of our program, it would represent little more than an academic exercise of dubious practical value.

Participating in Experiment 2 were 130 undergraduates. As with the previous experiment, participants were assigned randomly to either the tutorial or control conditions and rated the same series of ethical and unethical ads. Then, 1 to 4 days later, a research assistant, posing as a representative from the campus daily newspaper, administered a delayed questionnaire in the participants' psychology classes. This questionnaire asked respondents to evaluate the articles and advertisements in a new newspaper insert. Two of these advertisements were authority-based, one ethical and one unethical. Respondents rated the ads on a four-question scale including items such as “How did you like the ad?” with answers “I hated it; I disliked it; It was OK; I liked it; It was great!” and “Do you think that seeing this ad will make you more likely to use this product or service?” with answers “Definitely not; Possibly; Maybe; Probably; Definitely.”

The impact of the tutorial on immediate responses that we found in Experiment 1 was replicated in Experiment 2. Presence of the tutorial interacted with type of authority on both the perception of undue manipulative intent,  $F(1, 123) = 3.58, p = .061$ , and perceived persuasiveness of the ads,  $F(1, 118) = 11.22, p = .001$  (see Table 9.1).

The effects of the tutorial also persevered 1 to 4 days after the experiment. As predicted, presence of the tutorial interacted significantly with type of authority in the delayed measure,  $F(1, 47) = 4.51, p = .039$  (see Table 9.1).<sup>2</sup> An examination of the results for each day separately revealed that, if anything, the tutorial produced more prediction-consistent results on days 2, 3, and 4.

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<sup>2</sup>One participant was removed from this latter analysis due to his or her statistical outlier status (the Studentized deleted residual for this data point was  $-3.22$ , outside the conventional range of  $-3$  to  $3$ ).

Thus, participants maintained the benefits of the tutorial well after the end of the laboratory experiment, and these benefits did not appear to drop off, at least within the time period measured. The continued efficacy of the tutorial outside of the laboratory context increases confidence that demand characteristics cannot account for the results and suggests the practical value of tutorials of this type. If the present tutorial, using only a brief, written format, demonstrated significant effects days after its administration, an interactive, longer term program administered in schools could have profound and long-lasting results.

Experiment 2 did contain one worrisome finding. Although participants receiving the tutorial rated the ethical ads as significantly more persuasive than did controls, they did not resist the unethical ads significantly more effectively than controls. These results suggest that participants may agree with the distinction presented, but they may not internalize the lesson because they "wouldn't have fallen for the unethical ads anyway." Taylor and Brown (1988) suggested that such illusions are common and can be adaptive. However, in the present context, this self-enhancement bias (Fiske & Taylor, 1991) may leave targets less able to fend off inappropriate persuasive attacks. Indeed, as Fiske and Taylor put it, "Unrealistic optimism may lead people to ignore legitimate risks in their environment and fail to take measures to offset those risks" (p. 216).

These concerns were compounded by a common reaction obtained from nonpsychologists who heard about this research informally. "I think it's great that you're studying resistance to persuasion. TV ads are a real problem. Of course, they don't work on me ..."

To test our hypothesis that participants may have felt themselves to be uniquely resistant to the persuasive tactics that work on everyone else, we asked 888 undergraduates how much they believe television advertisements affect them, and we asked a separate 900 undergraduates how much they believe television advertisements affect the average ASU undergraduate. Participants responded on 0 to 6 Likert-type scales for which 0 indicated *very strongly*, 3 indicated *somewhat*, and 6 indicated *hardly at all*. As we suspected, participants rated themselves significantly less affected ( $M = 3.56$ ) by television ads as compared with their peers ( $M = 2.88$ ),  $F(1, 1786) = 124.69, p < .0001$ .

The results of this pilot study confirmed our concerns that participants maintained perceptions of personal invulnerability to advertising. These perceptions of invulnerability parallel those that frustrate educators seeking to convince youth of the dangers of drugs, alcohol, and sexually transmitted diseases. In each of these instances, as well as in the present research, illusions of invulnerability prevent people from perceiving their personal susceptibility to very real hazards.

Research in health psychology has uncovered a similar phenomenon, the optimistic bias (Weinstein, 1980). This bias appears as a discrepancy between perceptions of others' susceptibility to a disease and perceptions of one's own personal susceptibility to the illness. Unfortunately, this bias can lead to dire health outcomes, because low levels of perceived personal susceptibility are as-

sociated with poor compliance with preventive health behaviors (Aiken, Gerend, & Jackson, 2000).

### EXPERIMENT 3

In Experiment 3, we sought to dispel these illusions of invulnerability by *demonstrating* in an undeniable fashion that participants can be fooled by deceptive ads. We predicted that participants “stung” by a deceptive advertisement would demonstrate increased resistance against such ads in the future. In contrast, we anticipated that simply asserting participants’ vulnerability, as is done in many school-based programs on drug, alcohol, and sexually transmitted diseases, would prove less effective in motivating resistance.

The relative ineffectiveness of merely asserting vulnerability has been illustrated vividly in the area of health behaviors. For example, according to Aiken et al. (2000), “The public is inundated with information about cancer and with recommendations for cancer screening and prevention.” Nevertheless, the National Health Interview Survey of 1994 reported that 44% of women over 50 had failed to have a mammogram within the previous 2 years (American Cancer Society, 1997; National Center for Health Statistics, 1996).

Aiken et al. (2000) listed three stages of perceived susceptibility: “First, an individual is assumed to become aware of a health hazard (awareness), then to believe in the likelihood of the hazard for others (general susceptibility), and finally to acknowledge his or her own personal vulnerability (personal susceptibility).” Researchers attempting to increase compliance with health behaviors have sought to move people from Stage 2 to Stage 3. For example, Curry, Taplin, Anderman, Barlow, and McBride (1993) increased cancer screening in higher risk women through the use of tailored personal objective risk information.

Our pilot study demonstrated that many of our participants fell squarely into stage 2. They perceived that others were vulnerable to advertising but that they, themselves, were relatively immune. We anticipated that asserting participants’ vulnerability would leave many with their illusions intact. We predicted, however, that participants could be moved to Stage 3 by forcing them to acknowledge their own personal vulnerability.

Experiment 3 also enabled us to examine the mechanisms of the instilled resistance. We predicted that the observed resistance would be mediated by perceptions of undue manipulative intent. Furthermore, drawing on the cognitive response model of persuasion (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Greenwald, 1968; Petty, Ostrom, & Brock, 1981), we anticipated that resistance would manifest, at least in part, as an altered cognitive reaction to deceptive advertisements. We expected that these altered cognitive responses would mediate resistance, as well. To assess cognitive response, participants listed the thoughts they had in reaction to the ads. Subsequently, participants categorized these thoughts (as positive, negative, neutral, or irrelevant) in terms of their relation to the ad. Participants then completed a short

content quiz to determine how well they remembered various features and characteristics of the ads.

Finally, we noted the possibility that our results could have stemmed not from the efficacy of the tutorial but rather from the inhibiting nature of our tone and color control condition. Specifically, though designed to be innocuous, the tone and color essay may have inadvertently focused participants away from the ethical distinction, on which they might otherwise have focused. To test this possibility, we added a second control condition that asked participants to look through the example ads but provided no commentary.

Three hundred twenty ASU undergraduates were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: tone and color control, no commentary control, tutorial plus asserted vulnerability, and tutorial plus demonstrated vulnerability.

### Tone and Color Control

As in Experiments 1 and 2, participants in the tone and color control condition received a treatment packet that discussed cosmetic aspects of the accompanying ads.

### No Commentary Control

Participants in the no commentary control condition received a treatment packet that asked them to examine the accompanying ads but did not discuss any particular aspects of the ads.

### Tutorial Plus Asserted Vulnerability

Participants in the tutorial plus asserted vulnerability condition received a slightly modified version of the tutorial treatment packet of Experiments 1 and 2. Besides receiving a set of sample ads and a working definition of ethical (vs. unethical) authority-based advertisements as in the earlier experiments, participants were asked to consider whether they had been fooled by the deceptive ads of manipulative advertisers:

Take a look at ad #1. Did you find the ad to be even somewhat convincing? If so, then you got fooled. Unethical ads like this fool most people. But if we want to protect ourselves from being manipulated, we need to know what makes an ad ethical or unethical.

Many ads, such as ad #1, use authority figures to help sell the product. But not all ads use authority figures ethically. For an authority to be used ethically it must pass two tests. First, the authority must be a real authority, and not just someone dressed up to look like one. Second, the authority must be an expert on the product he or she is trying to sell.

Let's use these tests to examine ad #1. What about that guy selling the Wall Street Journal Interactive Edition? He sure looks like a stockbroker. But where are his name and credentials? The ad doesn't give us any. For all we know this guy is just a model. This ad is unethical because it fails the first test. This guy is just dressed up to look like an authority.

When you looked at this ad, did you notice that this "stockbroker" was a fake? Did you ask yourself whether you should listen to this so-called "expert"? If you didn't, then you left yourself vulnerable to the advertisers that are trying to manipulate you.

### Tutorial Plus Demonstrated Vulnerability

Participants in the tutorial plus demonstrated vulnerability condition received a treatment packet that did more than simply assert their vulnerability to deceptive ads. It demonstrated that vulnerability by first instructing participants to examine a sample deceptive ad and to respond to a pair of questions concerning it. The initial question asked them to indicate how convincing they found it on a 7-point scale where 0 = *not at all convincing*, 1 = *somewhat convincing*, 2 = *fairly convincing*, 3 = *convincing*, 4 = *quite convincing*, 5 = *very convincing*, and 6 = *extremely convincing*. Results indicated that the great majority of participants rated the ad as at least somewhat convincing. The second question asked participants which two aspects of the ad they found most important in making this decision and to write these reasons down in spaces provided. At this point, the treatment packet was identical to that of the tutorial plus asserted vulnerability condition except in two places. Rather than merely instructing participants, "Take a look at ad #1. Did you find the ad to be even somewhat convincing? If so, then you got fooled ...," the packet referred participants to their earlier committed response to the ad: "Take a look at your response to the first question. Did you find the ad to be even somewhat convincing? If so, then you got fooled ...". Similarly, rather than merely being asked, "When you looked at this ad, did you notice that this 'stockbroker' was a fake?" participants were first referred to their earlier responses to the question regarding the most important aspects of the ads that contributed to its convincingness: "Take a look at your answer to the second question. Did you notice that this 'stockbroker' was a fake?"

Participants in Experiment 3 rated two new ads. After rating each ad, participants were instructed to list the thoughts they had while examining the ad. Then, after rating and listing thoughts for both ads, participants were asked to categorize each thought as (a) positive toward the ad, (b) negative to the ad, (c) neutral to the ad, or (d) irrelevant to the ad. Finally, participants answered an eight-question content quiz concerning the content and features of the ads. These questions included, "What type of product was shown in the ad?" "Who was the person pictured in the ad?" and "What was the last feature listed at the bottom of the ad?"

The two control conditions did not differ significantly on any measured variable; consequently, we were assured that the control condition used in the previous studies had not served as an active treatment.

The tutorial once again interacted with type of authority significantly with respect to both perception of undue manipulative intent,  $F(3, 283) = 11.04, p < .001$ , and persuasiveness of the ads,  $F(3, 269) = 10.41, p < .001$  (see Table 9.1 and Fig. 9.2). Of particular note is the fact that the “tutorial plus asserted vulnerability” and “tutorial plus demonstrated vulnerability” conditions differed significantly in their interaction with type of authority with respect to ad persuasiveness,  $t(269) = 2.61, p = .010$ . An examination of the simple effects revealed that participants in these two treatment conditions did not differ in their perceptions of the nondeceptive ad,  $t(269) = -.65, p = .514$ , but they did differ significantly in their perceptions of the deceptive ad,  $t(269) = 2.71, p = .007$ . These results suggest that

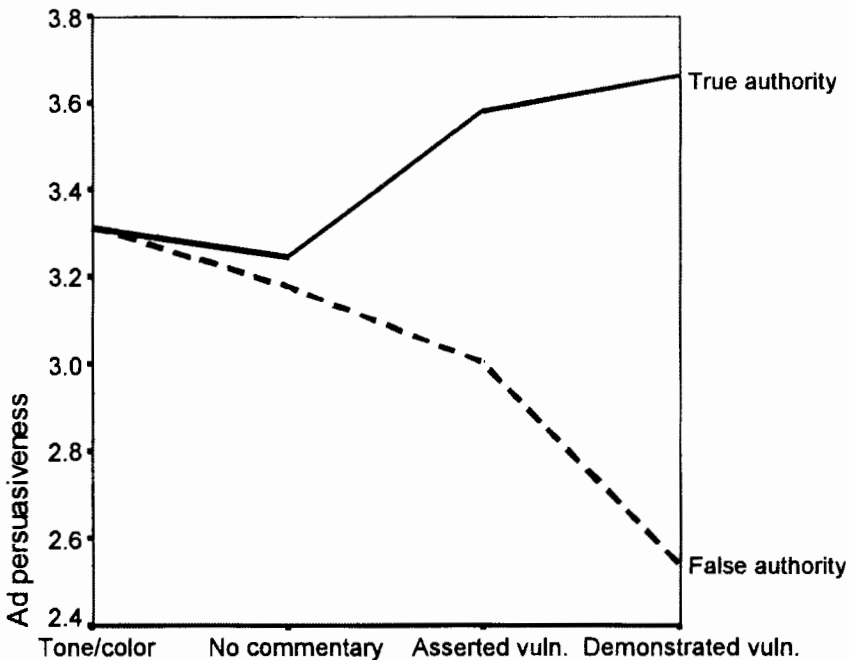


FIG. 9.2. The effects of the tutorial and the perception of vulnerability on the perceived persuasiveness of deceptive and nondeceptive advertisements in Experiment 3.

demonstrating participants' personal vulnerability to deceptive advertising significantly increased resistance to subsequent deceptive ads.

As suggested by our previous findings, the "tutorial plus asserted vulnerability" did not confer significant resistance to subsequent unethical ads, as compared with the control conditions,  $t(269) = 1.38, p = .169$ . In contrast, the "tutorial plus demonstrated vulnerability" produced significant resistance to subsequent unethical ads,  $t(269) = 4.53, p < .001$ . Thus, instilling resistance required more than merely asserting participants' vulnerability. Effective resistance required demonstrating this vulnerability.

### MEDIATION

A test of our mediational hypotheses revealed that the resistance conferred by the tutorials, as compared with the control conditions, could be mediated entirely through perceptions of manipulative intent. Furthermore, the effect of perceptions of manipulative intent on ad persuasiveness could be mediated partially by cognitive response, although a significant direct effect remained (see Fig. 9.3). This

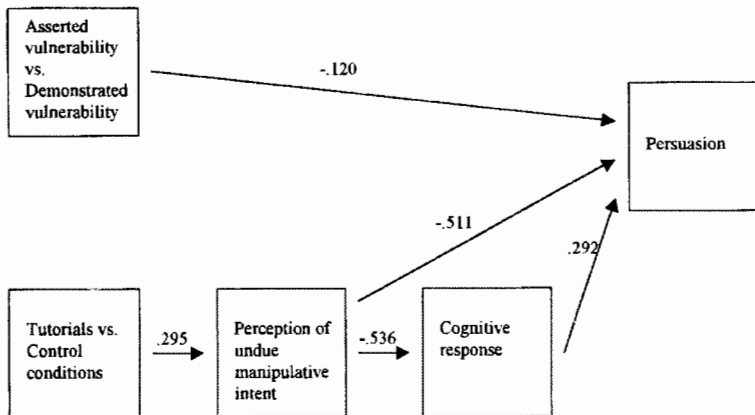


FIG. 9.3. The mediation of resistance by perception of undue manipulative intent and cognitive response in Experiment 3. All included paths have  $ps < .01$ . All excluded paths have  $ps > .20$ .

model fit the data well according to a chi-square goodness-of-fit test,  $C^2(4, N = 300) = 4.989, p = .288$ .

Interestingly, the additional resistance conferred by the demonstration of vulnerability was not mediated by perceptions of manipulative intent or cognitive response. Exploratory analyses suggest that this additional resistance may manifest as a result of these participants employing an alternative resistance strategy. Instead of closely examining and refuting unethical ads, participants faced with their vulnerability may have avoided the negative feelings now associated with unethical persuasive techniques by quickly dismissing unethical ads, resulting in decreased memory and intensity of thoughts regarding the ads.

One additional exploratory analysis revealed that a number of participants in the control condition reported thoughts of the type characteristic of those who received the tutorial. For example, these thoughts often questioned the ability or appropriateness of the spokesperson to give advice about the product advertised. However, many of these participants labeled such thoughts as neutral or irrelevant with respect to the ad. The greater proportion of controls who characterized such thoughts as neutral or irrelevant (21%) compared with participants who received the tutorial (13%) suggests that a portion of persuasive targets may already recognize the inappropriateness of unethical techniques, but they may not weigh the deceptiveness negatively in their assessment of the ad.

## CONCLUSIONS

Aaker and Myers (1987) estimated that marketers target us with more than 300 persuasive messages every day. Many of these messages attempt to engage heuristic scripts to elicit the desired level of compliance or attitude change. Our ability to critically distinguish between messages that employ heuristics appropriately and those that misuse them has become increasingly important, given the expanding prevalence and pervasiveness of advertising.

Even schools, traditionally a haven from this barrage, have become a medium for advertising. Through the adept marketing of Channel One, 8 million students now are required to watch commercials in school each day along with a news broadcast ("Reading, Writing ... and Buying?" 1998). In addition, many schools, desperate for funds, now allow advertising in hallways and on the sides of school buses.

Historically, social psychologists have had little to offer to those hoping to instill resistance to deceptive persuasion. The present research offers a remedial first step. In three experiments, participants learned one distinction between ethical versus unethical uses of authority in advertising. Compared with control groups, participants who were taught this distinction demonstrated resistance against subsequent advertisements that employed authority deceptively. Furthermore, compared with controls, these participants perceived nondeceptive advertisements as less manipulative and more persuasive.

These results suggest that the observed resistance stemmed not from stubbornness, cynicism, or reactance but rather from the newly acquired ability to critically appraise persuasive messages. In this way, the tutorial manifested McGuire's (1964) goal of making participants "receptive to the true and resistant to the false" (p. 192).

Experiment 2 demonstrated that the instilled resistance persevered 1 to 4 days after the tutorial, generalized to novel exemplars, and appeared outside of the program context. These results offer evidence that the observed resistance stemmed from an effective and lasting new skill and not from demand characteristics.

In Experiment 3, we sought to enhance the efficacy of the tutorial by demonstrating participants' vulnerability to deceptive advertising. We feared that without dispelling the illusion of invulnerability, participants might ignore the training, considering it personally irrelevant. Participants in this study first rated the persuasiveness of a deceptive ad, only then to discover that they had been manipulated successfully by the advertiser. Compared with participants who received the standard tutorial, those who had been demonstrably "stung" by the deceptive ad showed significantly greater resistance to subsequent deceptive advertisements.

The ability to dispel the illusion of invulnerability has applications that extend far beyond resistance to persuasion. Perceived personal vulnerability has been shown to be a critical predictor of compliance with health behaviors (Aiken et al., 2000). In a dramatic illustration of the danger of the illusion of invulnerability, Apanovitch, Salovey, and Merson (2000) discovered that only 2% to 16% (depending on ethnicity) of college students considered themselves vulnerable to AIDS, despite 85% understanding HIV transmission and 25% personally knowing someone with AIDS. Educational interventions that ignore this crucial element seem doomed to miss the vast majority of those at risk. The present research suggests, however, that an intervention need not be particularly elaborate to pierce this illusion and motivate the recipient to accept the preventative message offered.

Experiment 3 also offered insights into the mechanisms of the conferred resistance. Our data were consistent with the hypothesis that the resistance instilled by the tutorial was mediated by perceptions of undue manipulative intent. In addition, by adopting a cognitive response perspective, we predicted that resistance would manifest as an altered set of cognitions produced in response to ethical and unethical ads. The data were somewhat consistent with this mediational prediction. The effect of perception of undue manipulative intent on persuasion could be mediated partially by cognitive response, but a significant direct path remained.

It was more difficult to find evidence for the mechanisms involved in the greater resistance conferred by dispelling the illusion of invulnerability. Exploratory analyses allow us to offer a cautious interpretation that different resistance strategies may operate in the tutorial plus asserted vulnerability and the tutorial plus demonstrated vulnerability conditions. Specifically, these latter participants demonstrated worse memory for both ethical and unethical ads and reported less intense thoughts in response to the unethical ad compared with those in the asserted vulnerability condition. This suggests that participants in the

demonstrated vulnerability condition, after determining that an ad was deceptive, may have quickly turned their attention elsewhere to avoid being influenced or to avoid spending time on material that they thought would not influence them. It is possible that forced exposure to deceptive ads might engender more intense, negative thoughts in such participants, but that, given the opportunity to selectively avoid these ads, these participants actually experience less intense thoughts.

Results from Experiment 3 also suggest that a portion of the population already possesses the ability to detect deceptive techniques. However, detection does not always lead to resistance: a number of control participants who noted the inappropriateness of the spokesperson in the unethical ad nevertheless categorized the thought as neutral or irrelevant. For these participants, the tutorial might not provide a novel distinction but might, instead, suggest that the distinction should be taken into account when assessing future advertising.

As research psychologists continue to discover and develop the techniques of social influence, questions regarding the ethical use of such techniques become increasingly important. The present research suggests that such questions need not be pondered exclusively by influence agents. By learning to distinguish between the ethical and unethical uses of influence techniques, influence targets can build resistance to the deceptive while remaining receptive to the honest. These targets hardly are limited to prospective consumers exposed to advertising. Issues of ethical versus unethical communication exist in the organization as well (Neuliep, 1987, 1996). Indeed, Redding (1991) asserted that, owing to inherent power and authority differentials, the organizational environment is especially susceptible to ethical violations in the presentation of information. According to Redding (1991), one prominent category of unethical communications, labeled manipulative-exploitive, contains messages that are quite similar to those we examined in that they involve persuasive appeals presented under false pretenses. Because the dimension of expert authority is crucial to good decision making in any organization, our results easily could be generalized to the organizational domain, where individuals are regularly confronted with communications generated by purported authorities on the topic. Future research extending our findings and analysis to organizational communication settings would be welcome.

It is important to recognize that our purpose in this research is not to assert the superiority or validity of the particular ethical scheme we have chosen to employ. Instead, it is to investigate the extent to which reasonable ethical distinctions can be instilled readily in communication targets and can render these targets more resistant to messages that violate ethical criteria. A concomitant purpose is to identify the psychological mechanisms that are (and that are not) responsible for learned resistance to persuasive appeals. If both of these goals can be achieved, the outcomes stand to contribute to important applied and theoretical areas of concern.

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