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## AN EXPERIMENTAL INVESTIGATION OF HITCHHIKING\*<sup>1</sup>

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### A. INTRODUCTION

There are many areas of social concern in which theorizing has been done primarily on the basis of personal experience rather than systematic investigation. Hitchhiking is such an area. The literature reveals a number of variables that individual authors have felt to be important. For example, it has been claimed that female hitchhikers receive rides more quickly than males (2). Other strategies alleged to produce better results include the following: hitchhiking during the day rather than at night (2, 3, 8); carrying as little baggage as possible (3, 8, 10); using a sign to indicate one's destination (3); and traveling alone (3). The only attempt at experimental investigation (1) supports the values of being female, traveling alone, and wearing traditional clothing.

The present study was undertaken primarily to verify several hypotheses about hitchhiking, but also to demonstrate that strict experimental procedures could be maintained in a fluid social situation. The variables selected for investigation were (a) clothing of the hitchhiker, (b) city he attempted to hitchhike from, and (c) socioeconomic section of the city. Drivers who offered rides were analyzed according to liberalism, age, sex, number of passengers, and reason for offering the ride.

### B. METHOD

A factorial analysis of hitchhiking was undertaken in Dallas, Texas, and Stamford, Connecticut. The lower, middle, and upper socioeconomic sections were defined by use of the *Dallas Population Handbook: 1960* (6) for Dallas and the *U. S. Census of Population and Housing: 1960* (9) for Stamford as guides. Socioeconomic sections were selected by obtaining the median family income for each census tract. Some census tracts constellated together into certain economic ranges, and these constellations formed the basis for desig-

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nating socioeconomic sections. In Dallas, where the median family income is \$5976, the following ranges were selected to represent the lower, middle, and upper socioeconomic classes, respectively: \$2631-3938; \$4476-7646; \$10,526-25,000. In Stamford, where the median family income is \$7728, the corresponding ranges were \$5283-5953; \$7651-8196; \$14,300-17,560.

The same hitchhiker was used for all conditions. Two types of clothing were worn. The hip hitchhiker's clothing consisted of bell-bottoms, a peace shirt, beads, and a bandana around the forehead to keep shoulder-length hair in place. The hip hitchhiker wore no shoes and socks, and had a cigarette. The well dressed hitchhiker's clothing consisted of socks, shoes, pressed slacks, shirt, tie, and jacket. The hair looked short and well groomed. (Long hair became short hair by pulling back the hair behind the ears, making a pony tail, and tucking the pony tail inside the shirt.)

Only one lane streets were chosen. Only pleasant days were chosen to control for weather; to control for the effects of rush-hour and week-end traffic, hitchhiking was scheduled Monday through Friday from 9:00 to 12:00 a. m.

The hitchhiker went to a particular socioeconomic section under one clothing condition and counted the number of cars (excluding taxicabs and police cars) that went by before someone offered him a ride. This procedure was repeated eight times within each clothing condition, socioeconomic condition, and city condition. When a car stopped, the hitchhiker stepped into the car and verbally administered McClosky's conservatism-liberalism scale (5). Additionally, the following information was recorded: age and sex of driver, number of passengers, and the reason why the driver offered a ride to the hitchhiker. The purpose of the experiment was explained to the driver. The hitchhiker then left the car and returned to his starting point. In each city and socioeconomic section, 100 passing cars were observed to get the expected frequencies of the sex of the driver and the number of passengers, if any.

Data were collected from Dallas in April, 1971, and from Stamford in May, 1971; the total sample consisted of 96 observations.

### C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A three factor, independent measures design was calculated to test for the effects of different clothing, socioeconomic sections, and cities. The dependent variable was the number of cars that went by before one stopped. The average values for this variable are presented in Table 1.

There was a significant difference between styles of clothing ( $F = 8.92$ ,  $df = 1/84$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The well dressed hitchhiker received rides significantly more quickly than the hip hitchhiker. This result is consistent with the finding

TABLE 1  
MEAN NUMBER OF CARS PASSING WELL DRESSED AND HIP HITCHHIKERS IN DALLAS  
AND STAMFORD BY SOCIOECONOMIC SECTION OF CITY

City	Well Dressed Hitchhiker			Hip Hitchhiker		
	Lower	Middle	Upper	Lower	Middle	Upper
Dallas	45.3	25.6	28.6	84.6	51.8	19.2
Stamford	35.6	23.2	6.2	68.6	45.0	6.3

that drivers are more amenable toward offering a ride to the well dressed hitchhiker (1).

There was a significant difference between socioeconomic sections ( $F = 16.38$ ,  $df = 2/84$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The hitchhiker received rides significantly more quickly when he was in the upper socioeconomic section, followed by the middle and the lower socioeconomic sections. One possible reason for having to wait the longest when hitchhiking in the lower socioeconomic section is that the hitchhiker was white. In Dallas, approximately 85% of the drivers in this section were black, whereas only 70% of those who stopped to offer rides were black. In Stamford, the comparable figures were 60% and 20%.

There was a significant interaction between different styles of clothing and different socioeconomic sections ( $F = 3.80$ ,  $df = 2/84$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In the lower and middle socioeconomic sections of Dallas and Stamford the hitchhiker waited longest for a ride when he was dressed hip. In the upper socioeconomic section of Dallas, the hitchhiker waited longest for a ride when he was well dressed. Perhaps this result is due to a larger number of hippies and activists coming from upper socioeconomic sections (4). Over all conditions, there was a tendency for the hitchhiker in Stamford to be offered a ride more quickly than the hitchhiker in Dallas ( $F = 3.53$ ,  $df = 1/84$ ,  $p < .10$ ).

By means of a chi-square goodness of fit, with Yates' correction formula, results from the conservatism-liberalism questions were compared to a national distribution of replies for the first six items of McClosky's scale (7). These drivers gave answers to each item that were significantly more liberal than those of the average person over all ( $\chi^2$  values, all with 1  $df$ , were 61.3,  $p < .001$ ; 19.3,  $p < .001$ ; 7.3,  $p < .01$ ; 23.0,  $p < .001$ ; 14.3,  $p < .001$ ; 17.6,  $p < .001$ ). Thus, the authors infer that drivers who offer rides to the hitchhiker will be liberal.

A three factor, independent measures design was calculated to find if there were any significant differences in the degree of liberalism among drivers who offered a ride to the hitchhiker in regard to different styles of clothing, socioeconomic sections, and cities. There was a significant difference between styles

of clothing ( $F = 6.02$ ,  $df = 1/84$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Although the drivers were more liberal than the average person over all, the driver who offered a ride to the hip hitchhiker was significantly more likely to have a greater degree of liberalism than the driver who offered a ride to the well dressed hitchhiker.

There was a significant interaction in the degree of liberalism between different cities and different socioeconomic sections ( $F = 4.65$ ,  $df = 2/84$ ,  $p < .05$ ). In Dallas the most liberal drivers came from the middle socioeconomic section, while in Stamford the most liberal drivers came from the lower socioeconomic section.

A three factor, independent measures design was calculated to test for differences among the ages of drivers who offered a ride to the hitchhiker in regard to different styles of clothing, socioeconomic sections, and cities. There was a significant difference among the ages of drivers in regard to different styles of clothing ( $F = 6.85$ ,  $df = 1/84$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Drivers who offered a ride to the hip hitchhiker were younger than drivers offering a ride to the well dressed hitchhiker. Sixty-six per cent of the drivers who offered a ride to the hitchhiker were 29 years old or younger.

A chi-square goodness of fit, with Yates' correction formula, was calculated to find if there was a significant difference between the sexes of the drivers who offered a ride to the hitchhiker. There was a significantly greater probability of male drivers offering a ride to the hitchhiker ( $\chi^2 = 65.03$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This might have been influenced by the sex of the hitchhiker.

A chi-square goodness of fit, with Yates' correction formula, was calculated to find if there was a significant difference due to the number of passengers with the driver when the driver offered a ride to the hitchhiker. A significant number of drivers had no other passengers in the car ( $\chi^2 = 13.45$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Perhaps the major reason for this occurrence is that the driver had more time to think about the plight of the hitchhiker and how it feels to be hitchhiking. This hypothesis is consistent with the most frequent (34%) reason cited for the driver's offering a ride to the hitchhiker: "I have hitchhiked before and know how it feels." The second most frequent reply was the way a person looked (22%). For example, one reply was, "You were dressed nicely . . . I don't pick up any kids who are shabbily dressed." The third most frequent reply was that the driver had a habit of picking up hitchhikers (11%).

#### D. SUMMARY

A parametric analysis of hitchhiking was undertaken to assess the effects of differences in styles of clothing, socioeconomic sections, and cities. Char-

acteristics of drivers offering rides to the hitchhiker were explored by examining the following variables: liberalism, age, sex, number of passengers, and the reason why drivers offer a ride to the hitchhiker. The same person did the hitchhiking for all conditions. Results indicate that a hitchhiker will receive a significantly quicker ride if he is well dressed ( $p < .01$ ) and if he hitchhikes in the upper socioeconomic section of the city ( $p < .01$ ). Drivers who offer a ride to the hitchhiker are more liberal than the average person over all ( $p < .01$ ). The hitchhiker who is not well dressed is more likely to receive rides from a liberal driver ( $p < .05$ ) than is the well dressed hitchhiker. The hitchhiker will receive a quicker ride if the driver is alone ( $p < .001$ ) and if the driver is a male ( $p < .001$ ). The major reason cited for the driver's offering a ride to the hitchhiker was that the driver had hitchhiked before and knew how it felt (34%).

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