Part I
The process of minority influence

Introduction

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Work on social influence has been concerned with the multiplicity of situations in which the behaviours, perceptions, opinions, attitudes, etc. of an individual (or group of individuals) are modified by the behaviours, perceptions, opinions and attitudes of another individual (or group of individuals). Two contrasting categories of influence situation can be identified. In the first, the source of influence is a majority, or is attractive or is competent, etc. – in brief, it possesses some resource capable of ensuring its ascendancy over the target of influence. The latter, in a complementary fashion, is a minority or is deviant or is unattractive, or lacks competence. In practice most classic work has studied this side of the coin only, where the dynamics of influence are underpinned by one form or another of dependence which ensures the influence of the superior party and confines the subordinate party to conformity and submission. Certainly, this is sometimes, and perhaps even frequently, the case.

However, a second category of situations can also be envisaged. In this, minority individuals (or groups) viewed as deviant, and to begin with lacking any power, attractiveness, or competence, or indeed any resource capable of inducing dependence, succeed despite all this in modifying what the majority thinks, or in overturning social rules; they succeed in effect in bringing others to share their convictions. In the first chapter Serge Moscovici makes a strong plea for the study of minority influence. Such study is in fact novel in two ways. First, it introduces a fundamental theoretical shift, from a functionalist model of society to an interactionist model; from an asymmetric conception of influence processes (which reduces them to the mechanics of dependency effects) to a symmetric conception in which minorities are not simply targets but also sources of influence; from an exclusive focus on conformity processes to a model in which innovation phenomena occupy a central place. Having defined the basic theoretical options, a second question is raised which requires an equally novel answer: how can the influence of minorities be

explained if it cannot be derived from any form of dependence, minorities being by definition seen to have no resources of dependence at their disposal? Here a new perspective on deviance is advanced. For too long we have considered only the marginal and passive deviant. Here we are concerned with active deviance or active minorities in particular because they alone are capable of generating the potential for social change. On what is their influence based? On the only resource which a minority in practice possesses – its own behaviour. To exercise influence a minority must employ styles of behaviour, it must organise and plan its actions in space and time. The minority must be, in a word, consistent; it must be coherent, sure of itself, steadfast in negotiation. These styles have the power to create conflict in circumstances where uniformity would otherwise prevail. By its consistency the minority introduces an alternative into the social field with which the majority must come to terms. This is a theme which will be encountered frequently in this volume; if minorities have a social impact, it is by virtue of their capacity to create social conflict, through their potential for blocking all negotiation. In other chapters it will be seen that the induction of such conflict does not, however, exclude a certain attitude of compromise.

But let us look first at another important aspect of minority influence processes, taken up in the second chapter: minority influence is rarely public, rarely displayed in a direct social manner. While the hidden character of minority influence will be discussed in subsequent chapters (which deal with its indirect effects), the problem Machteld Doms and Eddy Van Avermaet consider is why public influence is so problematic for minorities, as compared with the strong public influence of the majority. One of the principal reasons, examined here in detail, is the lack of social support that a minority secures relative to the majority. In a majority influence situation, the target is, in effect, exposed to a degree of influence which exceeds the social support available for its own initial response. In a situation of minority influence, by contrast, minority pressure is largely counterbalanced by the support that the target receives from the other (majority) subjects in confirming the same (majority) response that the target initially defends. If this social support mechanism is effectively responsible for the contrast between the rather feeble public effects of a minority and the somewhat stronger ones of the majority, it should be possible to equalise their respective capacities for influence by holding constant the social support given to the target's own 'spontaneous' response. In a series of experiments, the authors contrive to do this through an experimental artifice: by simulating a breakdown in the measuring apparatus, they attempt to isolate the experimental subjects from the social support they would otherwise have received from the majority of other

subjects (responding in the correct or popular direction), thus rendering the minority and majority conditions effectively equivalent. It emerges that, other things being equal, the social support factor does effectively explain the difference between the majority and the minority in their relative degree of direct influence. Moreover, this demonstrates that what is important is the entire social context created by the minority influence situation; even within the experimental situation subjects can escape minority influence, particularly if they have the support of individuals who in some way represent their reference group and who socially reinforce their own initial responses. This relational dimension is particularly important since it is necessary to recognise that minorities appear, almost by definition, to be numerically more feeble, and at odds with the consensus.

In the third chapter Charlan Nemeth examines the public aspect of minority influence but also introduces measures of indirect or latent influence. What determines whether influence is direct or indirect? It depends on the nature of the compromise offered by the minority, not withstanding its behavioural consistency. There is no contradiction here. Everything depends on the level on which the minority seeks to exercise influence. Thus, to take the example of a bargaining or decision-making situation, it is evident that the goal is public influence in the sense that a choice has to be made; influence on this level can only be achieved by compromise in the course of negotiation. However, most of the time active minorities are studied in situations where they do not aspire to, or even realistically expect to achieve, public influence, and in which their behaviour is structured with strict consistency. Influence then will be indirect. Does a third possibility exist in which indirect influence closely matches public influence, in which compromise and consistency are reconciled? These two aspects of minority activity, in reality more complementary than contradictory, can effectively give rise to a two-fold influence, one overt and the other latent; this requires that minority compromise does not appear as a change in the private response of the minority (in which case the minority would be *ipso facto* perceived as inconsistent), but as minority tactics to facilitate collective agreement on the public level. By compromising, the minority is publicly influential; by its consistency, it is a source of latent influence.

The fourth chapter more directly examines this other specific dimension of the minority influence process, conversion, that is the indirect, latent form which minority influence often takes. Bernard Personnaz and Michel Guillon first of all describe the various experimental techniques, from the most simple to the most sophisticated, which have been used to demonstrate the effects of conversion. These effects routinely emerge as specific to minorities;

majorities have the greater influence on public responses but no latent effects. In contrast, minorities find their influence taking the following pattern. At the public level their influence is undetectable, almost zero, or at the most very feeble. At the same time, some change occurs in responses that have some link with the object directly involved in the influence attempt, which, although not a direct acknowledgment of the minority, does indirectly result from it. Confronted with majorities, target subjects make a social comparison of their responses with those of the majority and tend to resolve the social conflict at the most socially overt level of response. Faced with minorities, on the other hand, such a comparison of responses at the public level is no longer made. Instead, one finds a focus on the object, a search for a valid definition of the object in which the minority alternative is considered and thus becomes a source of change, often unsuspected by the individuals affected. Why these contrasting reactions? The authors argue that these effects are linked to the dynamics of the representations generated in the course of a conflict-laden interaction between source and target. Faced with a majority, the subject would be preoccupied by his own 'minority' position as a deviant in relation to a majority and would pay attention to the interpersonal relationship thus made salient at the expense of more intellectual considerations. The external social conflict remains to a certain extent psychologically externalised, and becomes increasingly so as the conflictual interaction develops. When faced with a minority, however, this external social conflict is internalised by the target subject; it is projected inwards so that the subject factor becomes a redefinition of the object of dispute.

Chapter 4 is also concerned both with the dynamics of the representations linked to conflict and with the mechanisms involved in the gradual con- sciousness of internal changes that is characteristic of conversion. The changes and influence processes examined here prove to be exciting and surprising, taking forms which have been rarely studied in the past. This little known type of influence has only come to light because of the emergence of research on minority influence. Although several experimental attempts have now been made to demonstrate its existence and uncover its mechanisms, much still remains to be explained.

Minority influence thus proves to be a particularly fertile research field. On the one hand theories about the mechanisms of influence which have been taken for granted for too long now need to be modified. On the other hand processes are now revealed which have previously been hardly considered. Thus we find that social conflict is sought by the minority, is indeed the sole weapon of active minorities; they can thus exercise influence only by consistently resisting any negotiation with the majority. Their influence, moreover, takes the form of private conversion.

The apparent failure of minorities at the public level is the basis for the research programme described in chapter 5, which concludes Part I of this volume. Stamos Papastamou and Gabriel Mugny develop the idea that the social context of innovation is a particularly complex one. When one considers ideological minorities (for example, anti-militarist, or anti-nuclear factions), it may be seen that the minority is confronted on one side with power (pro-militarist, pro-nuclear factions) and on the other with the population, which is the real target of influence. Within this framework, consistency defines the oppositional relation of the minority with respect to the established powers; consistency is indispensable in this relation if the minority is to appear as an alternative in the social field. In the face of power, blockage of negotiation is the most adequate strategy. To influence the population, however, a minority does better to show itself open to negotiation, to avoid inducing the appearance of too great a divide through any behaviour that the population would perceive as rigid.

Several dimensions of research summarised here are located around the functioning of such rigidity. Following a definition of flexible *versus* rigid negotiation styles in relation to a population (in contrast to more or less consistent behavioural styles in relation to power), a study is made of the effects they have on the representations induced by the minority. However, these representations do not derive solely from minority styles; they also depend substantially on the normative context that prevails in a particular situation. Thus the same minority behaviour takes on a different meaning according to whether it is judged in terms of conformity, objectivity, independence, or social originality norms. These normative contexts are to a large degree established by the powers that be, which thus defend themselves against minorities by a tendency to promote a psychological interpretation of their deviance. Their behaviours then cease to reflect an alternative in the social field since they are seen simply as revealing the psychology of the minority. These highly potent context effects thus explain the difficulty minorities have in achieving direct public influence, since they render salient the social costs of the identity which would be involved in movement towards, or acceptance of, the minority thesis, as the evaluative connotations associated with it are often highly negative. But this does not imply total absence of influence since, even if rigidity diminishes public influence, it often induces a more marked conversion effect!

One of the important consequences of the approach the authors advocate is to redefine the relationship between majority and minority influence in a more dynamic and dialectic manner. The experimental study of one without the other can only be an abstraction. It is only by locating it within the overall social field (which includes both power and population) that minority

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influence can be understood for what it is. Moreover, this idea will be
encountered in other chapters. Hence, for example, does not a consideration
of the effects of social support in resistance to minority influence also derive
from a dynamic and integrated conception of minority and majority
influence?

   To sum up, processes of minority influence are based on two key notions,
those of conflict and conversion. They are based on conflict first because it
is the weapon available to the minority to unsettle, particularly by a display
of consistency, a group or a social system. However, this is a conflict which
the minority also has to negotiate to some extent with those it wishes to
influence. Secondly, they are based on conversion, a gradual mechanism of
internal, covert change, the outcome of a cognitive activity whose details have
yet to be researched. Paradoxically, a minority derives its power to influence
indirectly from the very conditions which inhibit its direct or public influence,
in other words those of conflict. Here is an idea with which we must become
familiar even if it does overturn the framework to which we have become
accustomed in the classic treatments of social influence processes. It also
implies that the entire dynamics of social change should be considered; the
social context of innovation points to the need to take account of minority
and majority influences simultaneously within a single dynamic model. And
the theoretical elements developed so far with regard to the mechanisms
entailed in minority influence provide the scope for such an integration.

1. Innovation and minority influence

SERGE MOSCOVICI

1. The parable of the lonely minority

In beginning the preparation of this chapter two events immediately came to my mind. One took place in the real world and one in the laboratory. During a recent conversation, Fritz Heider revealed that his ideas were publicly presented for the very first time in 1921 to a kind of popular science group at Graz in Austria. He recalled that his colleagues, with one exception, merely laughed and departed without further comment. And this brings me to the other event. Every student in psychology knows of the famous experiment by Asch. Individuals, who find themselves in groups of eight to 15 stooges who assert that two visibly unequal lines are in fact equal, naive to the deception, adopt this manifestly incorrect judgment. But what most students do not know is that at the end of his series of experiments and out of curiosity Asch reverses the situation. A single stooge affirms in front of 14 or 15 'naive' individuals that these visibly unequal lines are equal. These other individuals, like Heider's colleagues, begin to laugh, perhaps embarrassed by what this crazy person claims (Harvey, Ickes & Kidd, 1976).

Laughter, then, is a common reaction to a minority of one individual, whether encountered in real life or in the laboratory. However, the resemblance between the two events ends there. In the real life example, strong in his convictions and obligated by standards of scientific inquiry, Heider stuck resolutely and consistently to his position. He exposed himself to indifference and isolation until he was ultimately acknowledged and accepted. He, in effect, followed the path that all minorities have followed since time immemorial to establish innovations and alter majority opinion. In the laboratory, on the other hand, with his exploration of the phenomena of conformity accomplished, Asch published his now widely known conclusions. The subsequent experiment he has recounted only to the privileged few, like a savoury, an ambiguous closing comment on his research. And each has been

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able to take or leave it in his own way. It seemed to lie outside the proper territory of social psychology and touched limits beyond which trespassing would be risky, if not punished.

But why the laughter? Why does the same judgment create difficulties for individuals when expressed by a majority but provoke mirth in them when introduced by a minority? It is as if the first condition represents a 'natural' state for individuals in society while the second is an 'artificial' state; being in this condition is maladaptive, abnormal and even comic. But let us note for a moment that our minority of a single individual has made more progress in the real world than in the laboratory. He began his task at the point where the experiment left off.

I do not know how clear my parable is. What I want to show is simply that the aim of research on minority influence is to reduce the discrepancy between events in the laboratory and those in the real world. Its aim is to push back the limits imposed by existing theory and include phenomena relating to innovation in groups and in society (Moscovici & Faucheux, 1972; Moscovici & Nemeth, 1974). We have sometimes suggested that in this sense our research represents an inversion of Asch's. We have said that it is the exact contrary of his own. At the level of experimental procedures this is, strictly speaking, true. But taken as a whole, it raised questions which go beyond those posed within the social psychology of conformity. And it is also characterised by the view that the minority state is as 'natural' as that of the majority. It explores what happens when the laughter ends and examines the conditions under which the 'crazy' individual ends up the winner. Or, we might say, how does he get the others to laugh *with* him ('he who laughs last laughs longest')? In exploring these questions we enter a no-man's land of uncharted psychological phenomena and problems.

2. The paradox of conformity

These preliminaries are intended to raise basic questions and to tackle fundamental issues. In depriving myself of the comfort and security an author may derive from the presentation of specific research, I am taking the calculated risk that this chapter may seem too elementary or general. As I have just indicated, the gap that separates the manner in which influence is exercised in the real world and the way it has been analysed in the laboratory has finally led to the study of innovation and minority influence phenomena. Justifications of this kind based in experience are often necessary, but they are never sufficient grounds for launching into a particular area of research for they do not indicate the direction in which one should go or the

assumptions one should make. Indeed, in so far as I became preoccupied with these kinds of phenomena it was because I had earlier been struck by certain theoretical problems. More exactly, I was struck by a paradox inherent in the dominant paradigm in social psychology. This paradox indicates not only why innovation and minority influence have not been analysed but why they could not. Or, in other words, it marks a limit to theory in the same way that Asch's results mark a limit to experiments.

This then is the paradox. If you examine the literature and the textbooks closely you will find they contain two simple ideas, presented as established postulates. First, individuals are motivated to achieve correct judgments of things, to bring valid judgments to bear upon them. When, for objective reasons, they cannot do this, they turn to others. Second, the conformity of individuals to a group facilitates movement of the group towards its goal, and thus conduces to its success and its adaptation to reality. Everything else, or almost everything, is deduced from these two ideas. They explain why groups try to achieve unanimity and why similar individuals are drawn to one another. They also define deviants as sources of difficulty, as obstacles to the progress of the group and its adaptation to the external world (Festinger, 1950; Schachter, 1951; Jones & Gerard, 1967). An impressive number of experiments have illustrated the *consequences* flowing from these postulates in the most diverse areas, conferring upon them the solidity of a mental frame of reference. And, time after time, it has been observed that even if one rewards individuals for correct responses, even if they are informed that all erroneous judgments, although they conform to those of the group, will lead to collective failure, their reaction remains the same. They prefer to say what the group says rather than what they see themselves (Duetsch & Gerard, 1955). We do not find this surprising.

For a long time it has been known that men bend more towards the consensus of all than towards the truth of a single person. They choose being with others against reality in preference to being with reality against others. All organisations and all propaganda take this for granted and use it as their lever. Consciousness of this impasse has directed other experiments, such as those of Kelley & Shapiro (1954), towards the potential deviant. Attempts have been made to combat the conformist propensity, to stimulate the individual to prefer reality and to counter group pressure, to influence the group by telling others what he sees and what he believes to be true. But experiments such as these did not serve their purposes because they left untouched the theoretical facet of the paradox which served as a kind of certification of the individual's powerlessness. Nonetheless, the impression grew that conformity to the group did not have the beneficial character once