

How Minorities Prevail: The Context/Comparison–Leniency Contract Model

William D. Crano* and Viviane Seyranian

Claremont Graduate University

The pioneering efforts of Moscovici in the late 1960s motivated social psychologists to understand how minority groups affected the majority, and conversely, how the majority affected the minority. The underlying processes of influence have been found to be quite different, and understanding their operation provides insight into the processes of social influence, persuasion, and intragroup conflict and cooperation. This review tracks some of the development of this progression and details some contributions to understanding fundamental features of the influence process that have been uncovered as a result of this work. We consider major explanatory models, with particular emphasis on Crano's (2001) context/comparison model, and its allied leniency contract, a comprehensive account of the conditions that prevail when majorities and minorities wield influence. Finally, how this work informs important processes of influence in the world outside the laboratory are discussed.

The field of minority influence implicitly involves the study of both processes of conflict and cooperation (see King, Hebi, & Beal, this volume). Groups are seldom entirely homogenous in opinion, beliefs, or attitudes, and particular issues relevant to group life can create numerical minority and majority factions. How these differences or conflicts are resolved and how cooperation continues to persist is of central importance to group maintenance. Differences between group members may create both intraindividual and intragroup conflict, but cooperation toward achieving group goals is often achieved through a process of accepting or rejecting particular persuasion attempts abounding in the group. As such, influence by majority or minority factions is intricately woven into the very fabric of the process of conflict and cooperation in groups.

*Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to William D. Crano, Department of Psychology, Claremont Graduate University, Claremont, CA 91711 [e-mail: william.crano@cgu.edu].

Intragroup conflict is likely when factions within a group hold differing opinions, beliefs, or attitudes concerning important aspects of group life. Group members that swim against the current of opinion in the group are thought to evoke conflict. In other words, numerical minorities are commonly construed as the pebble in the majority's shoe. But it is precisely this type of conflict or strain that may provide a potentially fertile arena for group innovation (Moscovici, 1976) and intragroup or intergroup cooperation toward new goals. As Dovidio and colleagues (in this volume) assert, intragroup conflict may be "healthy" and represent a development stage whereby the minority position is given credence in the group.

In fact, innovation and social change may depend on the efforts by active minorities to challenge the prevailing order that is frequently safeguarded by the majority. Minority dissent, while potentially introducing conflict and strain in groups, may introduce diversity (King et al., this volume) and produce beneficial effects toward the achievement of group goals.

How, then, can a minority prevail? That a numerical minority can influence the thoughts and behaviors of members of the majority is no longer at issue in social psychology. Compelling evidence of minority influence is readily available, and has been since Moscovici's seminal contributions (Moscovici, Lage, & Naffrechoux, 1969). The pace of experimentation, theory building, and application of minority influence has quickened (see Butera & Mugny, 2001a, b; Crano & Prislin, 2006; De Dreu & De Vries, 2001), and has provided psychology with a model of progress. It is less clear when the minority will influence the majority, who the minority will influence, and what effect (i.e., direct or indirect attitude change) will result. Although these questions are rooted in the social influence field, as noted above, they are not trivial issues for intragroup or intergroup relations.

In this review, we briefly discuss Moscovici's (1980, 1985b) theory of minority influence, conversion theory. Then, an in-depth review of contemporary research and theory in minority influence is provided, with particular attention paid to the context/comparison model. As the lion's share of minority influence studies have been conducted in the laboratory, we devote a final section to considering various practical applications of minority influence and suggestions for future research outside the laboratory.

Conversion Theory Essentials

Moscovici's (1980, 1985b) conversion theory was developed to explain the effects of the minority on majority group members' reported perceptions, attitudes, and actions. Conversion theory asserts that being confronted with a counterattitudinal majority or minority creates inner conflict and tension, which results in a motivation to reduce conflict. Moscovici (1980, 1985a, b) held that majorities

effected compliance by virtue of resource (rewards, information) control. Being out of synchrony with the majority incurs costs. Majorities, on the other hand, stimulate a comparison process requiring little cognitive effort; the target attempts to understand the discrepancy between his or her position and the majority's, and publicly concedes to the majority to avoid ostracism. Minorities persuade by stimulating curiosity. They raise questions in the minds of their listeners regarding the how and why of their opinions. Pondering the minority's counternormative perceptions through an effortful validation process may produce change. Theoretically, considering the minority's message takes time, and thus, should it occur, minority influence is expected to be delayed rather than immediate.

It is difficult to overstate the important contribution of conversion theory in stimulating minority influence research. Yet the theory has remained relatively static (Martin, Hewstone, & Martin, 2003). It did not anticipate many of the results unearthed with the inexorable pace of research. Today, for any model of minority influence to map the difficult topography of data in the field, it must:

- account for the conditions when majority or minority messages are elaborated;
- predict the conditions under which in-group and out-group minorities prevail;
- explain when the majority will have an immediate short-term effect, an immediate lasting effect, or no effect;
- elucidate the conditions under which the minority group will have an immediate effect, if and when its persuasive effects will be delayed, and when it can be expected to have no persuasive effect;
- contrast the conditions under which a change on the targeted belief will follow a minority's message, and when change on an indirect attitude (which is related to the focal attitude, but not identical to it) will occur.

Conversion theory did not anticipate many of these requirements, but today's theories must. The context/comparison model (Alvaro & Crano, 1997; Crano, 2000b; Crano & Alvaro, 1998b; Crano & Chen, 1998), together with one of its components, the leniency contract model, was developed to address all of these requirements. As such, this model will receive particular attention in this review, alongside a host of other models that modify conversion theory in some way. These include, among others, the elaboration likelihood-based (ELM; Petty & Wegener, 1999) model of Martin et al. (2003); Nemeth's (1995) convergent-divergent thought approach; the social consensus-based treatment of Mackie (1987); integration of social consensus and convergent/divergent thought in an information processing model by De Dreu, De Vries, and colleagues (1996, 1999, 2001, 2002; DeDreu & West, 2001); the conflict-based models of Mugny and associates (Butera & Mugny, 2001a, b; Mugny, 1982; Mugny, Butera, Sanchez-Mazas, & Pérez, 1995);

the courage hypothesis (Baron & Bellman, 2007); the social identity interpretation (David & Turner, 1999, 2001a, b); dynamic change theory (Prislin, Brewer, & Wilson, 2002; Prislin & Christensen, 2002, 2005; Prislin, Limbert, & Bauer, 2000); and the metacognitive perspective (Tormala, 2008; Tormala, DeSensi, & Petty, 2007).

Attitude Formation versus Attitude Change

A glaring complication with conversion theory's prediction that minorities will have only a delayed influence is that many studies have produced findings that demonstrate immediate minority-induced effects on perceptions or beliefs (Crano & Hannula-Bral, 1994; Martin, Gardikiotis, & Hewstone, 2002; Martin & Hewstone, 2003; Martin et al., 2003). There is no convenient way conversion theory can account for this result if, as the theory holds, minority effects are mediated by contemplation. A reconciliatory route may be found in a review by Chaiken, Wood, and Eagly (1996), who argued for a closer consideration of the distinction between attitude formation and attitude change. In attitude formation, attitude strength by definition is not great. Indeed, in some contexts, the attitude may not even exist. In attitude change contexts, the attitude does indeed exist, and it may be held with conviction. The presence of a strongly held belief has clear implications for resistance (Knowles & Linn, 2004). In a minority attack on an established belief, conflict (Moscovici, 1980, 1994; Pérez & Mugny, 1996) is aroused and some form of defense will be mounted, be it strong counterargumentation, source derogation, biased processing, or distortion. Logically, defensive responses to a counterattitudinal (or counternormative) message would be exacerbated when the source of the contrary message was a minority. In an attitude formation context, however, it is unlikely that strong resistance would arise in response to a minority authored communication, for in the absence of a strongly held belief or norm, little conflict would be aroused and the recipient would have little to defend. As such, cognitive defenses would not be invoked, or if invoked, would not be strong. In these circumstances, we postulate a counterintuitive postulate, namely that the minority might be more influential than the majority, and the influence it induces would be immediate and not delayed.

Both of these propositions deserve consideration, as they have the potential to regularize much of the literature of minority influence. Consider Martin and Hewstone (2003), whose topics of study are relevant to the attitude formation/attitude change distinction. These researchers reported an immediate attitude shift toward the minority after participants heard a strong (vs. weak) minority message advocating legalizing euthanasia. The minority had no effect on attitudes following a (strong or weak) minority message arguing for the adoption of the Euro. The researchers attributed this disparity to message topic: a minority message of high relevance or vested interest (Crano, 1995) that argues for a negative personal

outcome (introducing the Euro) will be resisted, and people will invest more effort to understand the majority's message. Conversely, people exert more cognitive effort to process a minority message that is low-in vested interest and outcome involvement (e.g., euthanasia). Arguably, some message topics and/or social issues such as animal research (Martin & Hewstone, 2003; Experiment 1), euthanasia (Martin & Hewstone, 2003; Martin et al., 2003), or even deciding a hypothetical defendant's guilt (Baron & Bellman, 2007) may involve weakly formed attitudes or nonattitudes. As Martin and Hewstone (2003) note, "we deliberately chose a topic on which we knew our participants did not hold strong attitudes because we wanted them to be influenced by the initial message" (p. 592). Baron and Bellman (2007) echo a similar sentiment on their message topic, "our topic of hypothetical defendant guilt . . . was not likely to be highly involving for our participants" (p. 120). These topics may involve weakly formed attitudes because they are of low-vested interest, outcome involvement, and attitude importance (e.g., Krosnick, 1988). Research indicates that one of the indicators of attitude strength is whether the attitude topic or issue is of importance and elicits a sense of subjective concern (Boninger, Krosnick, & Berent, 1995; Krosnick, 1988). As such, in cases of low-vested interest or attitude importance, people may be convinced by the minority because they have weakly formed attitudes. That is, they have little to defend and do not have much to lose in forming their attitudes, especially when presented with a strong message. Accordingly, by virtue of the attention it elicits, a minority source may be more influential than a majority, and may be capable of provoking immediate focal change. This is precisely what Martin and Hewstone (2003; Experiment 2) showed. In the case of attitude formation (euthanasia), strong messages delivered by a minority source were more influential than a majority source in eliciting immediate focal change. Furthermore, attitudes formed as a result of minority influence appeared more resistant to subsequent persuasion pressures, more likely to persist, and better to predict behavior than attitudes formed as a result of majority persuasion (Martin et al., 2003).

With strongly held beliefs, a different story emerges. Topics used in experimental studies such as converting from the British pound to the Euro (Martin & Hewstone, 2003), requiring students to complete several hours of volunteering weekly for a few years to complete their university degree (Tormala et al., 2007), or instituting university entrance exams (De Dreu & De Vries, 1993, 1996) may not only be held with substantial vested interest, they also are subjects on which people have developed strong attitudes owing to prior exposure. This may also be true for social issues that are conceivably held with stronger conviction such as illegal immigration, war, and universal health care coverage. In these circumstances, people may mount strong cognitive defenses to defend their positions, and the source must be capable of exerting sufficient persuasive pressure to surmount resistance to immediate focal change. Such a source may be found in an in-group majority that is perceived as self-relevant, legitimate, and who delivers a strong message. That a majority source is a potent persuasive force for attitude change is

supported by a host of studies (e.g., De Dreu & De Vries, 1993, 1996; De Dreu, De Vries, Gordijn, & Schuurman, 1999; Gordijn, De Vries, & De Dreu, 2002; Kerr, 2002), including Martin and Hewstone's (2003) experiment, which demonstrated that a strong majority message elicited more immediate change than the identical message attributed to a minority.

Similar to Martin and Hewstone (2003), considering attitude formation versus attitude change may explain other studies that have produced seemingly disparate findings. In Baron and Bellman's (2007) studies, an attitude formation task was used to assess the impact of a courageous minority. Students completed attitudinal measures after reading a crime report followed by a jury transcript with juror dialogue advocating a hypothetical defendant's guilt (majority) or acquittal (minority). This task elicited little involvement on the part of the participants—they made a personal decision on a hypothetical case with little seeming implication for themselves or anyone. Other jury decision-making research (e.g., MacCoun & Kerr, 1988) includes jury deliberations in real group settings and judicial video instructions, which might make the case more self-relevant and involved. Results of Baron and Bellman's (2007) study showed that a courageous (vs. noncourageous) minority effected more immediate focal change on guilt ratings regardless of message strength. As message strength did not have an effect on immediate focal change, Baron and Bellman speculated that a courageous minority acts as a peripheral cue instigating heuristic processing. In an attitude change context (mandatory senior comprehensives), however, Kerr (2002) showed that an active minority (a construct closely related to courage; see Baron & Bellman, 2007) provoked more immediate focal change than a passive minority, but only when it delivered strong messages, suggesting that in attitude change contexts, active minorities encourage systematic processing. Together, these two studies suggest that in an attitude change contexts (Kerr, 2002) where cognitive defenses are mounted, systematic message analysis might be required if a minority is to prevail, even if the issue is of low personal relevance. However, in an attitude formation context (Baron & Bellman, 2007), minority characteristics such as courage could stimulate heuristic processing. Tests of the plausibility of these speculations await future research. Future research, both inside and outside the laboratory, would be well advised to quantitatively assess whether the message topic or social issue under persuasion pressure falls into attitude formation and attitude change contexts.

Context/Comparison Considerations: Majority–Minority Effects in Attitude Formation

Minorities and attention capture. Why would the minority be a more powerful influence source than the majority in attitude formation? The answer may be anticipated from two independent lines of research. The first is drawn from research on stimulus salience and the orienting response (e.g., Folk & Gibson, 2001). In this literature, researchers consistently have found that novel or salient stimuli

capture attention (Gati, Ben-Shakhar, & Avni-Liberty, 1996; O’Gorman, 1979; Wright, 2005). A member of a minority group is salient because minority group members are, relatively speaking, rare, unusual, or atypical. In some contexts, this attention will result in rapid refutation. But in other circumstances, the attentional advantage may work in the minority’s favor. One such facilitative context involves attitude or norm formation. When no strong belief or response norm is in place, the minority may be advantaged owing to its enhanced salience, which draws attention to its position. In such contexts, the enhanced attention afforded the minority’s position would not be met with strong defensive counterargumentation, as there is, by definition, little or nothing to defend. Accordingly, we might expect that immediate focal minority influence would occur in contexts that involve attitude or norm formation—that is, when no strong beliefs or established response norms exist. As our earlier review of the minority influence literature suggested, this is precisely the circumstance in which immediate focal minority effects do occur (e.g., Martin & Hewstone, 2003). Such outcomes occur when the attitude is not strongly held, or the response norm is not well established.

Minorities as dissimilar comparators. A second line of study that highlights contexts in which a minority might actually be a favored information source is found in research on social comparison. Festinger (1954) theorized that in the absence of objective guidelines, we use other people to gauge the propriety of our beliefs. An interesting feature of this theory is that not all comparison partners are defined as equally desirable (Crano, 2000a). Rather, Festinger proposed that comparators similar to the individual making the comparison would be preferred. This feature has not received consistent support (Suls, Martin, & Wheeler, 2003). We believe the task on which the comparison is undertaken may influence comparator choice. Goethals and Darley (1977) found dissimilar others were sought out more avidly than similar comparators when the comparison task involved an objective or consensually agreed upon solution (also see Olson, Ellis, & Zanna, 1983). Thus, in solving a tough problem in mathematics, we might prefer to confer with persons whose training and orientation were different from ours, in hopes that the preferred partner would share strengths and weaknesses dissimilar from our own. In this way, we would be more likely to triangulate on the proper solution. We would not share common sources of bias, which could doom us to a consensually agreeable mistake. Research by Laughlin (1980, 1988) on collective induction, and intellective versus judgmental tasks, is consistent with the findings of Goethals and his colleagues (e.g., Goethals & Nelson, 1973).

A different rubric would be employed when seeking a comparison partner to bolster a subjective judgment. In that case, it is reasonable to expect that individuals prefer comparators similar to themselves. In circumstances involving subjective choices, it makes sense that we would favor someone who shared our beliefs and values, as the grounds for subjective comparisons with dissimilar others are not

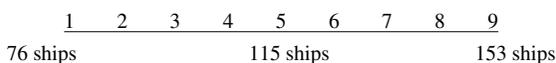
readily obvious. Gorenflo and Crano (1989) formally tested these arguments in research in which participants were asked to make judgments characterized as being either subjective or objective. In their first study, participants played the role of university admission officers. They were to consider the credentials of an applicant, decide upon his admission, and write a brief defense of their decision. Some participants were led to believe that theirs was a subjective judgment, others that the judgment was clearly objective. In fact, all received identical information. After making their judgments, participants were told that standard practice in universities involved admissions officers conferring with their peers after having formed an initial impression of a candidate, and thus, they would be allowed to confer with another admissions officer of their choice. Both in-group and out-group comparison partners were made available. The central issue was the effect of the (objective or subjective) task description on participants' choices. Results confirmed expectations. Those who believed they were making a subjective judgment strongly preferred to confer with judges who they believed to be similar to them; the opposite was found among the judges who believed they were making an objective judgment. In this case, a strong preference for out-group over in-group judges was evident. A second experiment involving a mock jury, which was conceptually similar in design to the first, replicated these results.

These preference reversals suggest that the subjective or objective nature of the issue under consideration powerfully affects targets' openness to similar or dissimilar influence sources. Extrapolating from the social comparison literature, it may be argued that a "different" other would be advantaged when pressing a position on an issue that admits to an objective judgment. Conversely, on subjective issues, a similar (i.e., in-group) other might be advantaged. The words *similar* and *different* emphasize the importance of considering the social identity of the target. Influence targets of majority status should be more susceptible to majority influence on issues thought to involve subjective judgments (attitudes, beliefs, preferences), and minority targets should prove more susceptible to fellow minority group members. However, in objective judgment contexts, outsiders enjoy a natural advantage. Thus, a member of the majority would be more influenced by a minority group member than a fellow majority group member; the opposite would be the case for the minority influence target. However, salience differences, discussed earlier, force a slight modification of these main effect predictions. As argued, the minority enjoys the advantage of relative uniqueness. Coupled with this advantage is the persuasive advantage assigned to dissimilar comparators in objective judgment contexts. The most powerful minority influence effects should occur in this circumstance. In subjective contexts, in which the persuasive advantage is accorded the in-group, the minority salience advantage may still hold. This suggests that a minority source may be more successful with fellow minority members than the majority influence source is with fellow majority

members. All of this assumes that the critical issue is not highly vested or strongly established.

Crano and Hannula-Bral (1994) tested these possibilities in a study involving the creation of novel response norms. In their experiment, participants first completed a minimal group task, and were informed that their group was composed of a majority or a minority of their fellow students. They then answered a series of obscure factual questions presented on individual computer screens. The questions were drawn from Pettigrew’s (1958) category width scale, and were exceptionally difficult, as illustrated:

An average of 50 ships entered or left New York harbor daily during the period from 1950 through 1955. What do you think was the largest number of ships to enter or leave New York in a single day during this period?



The objective or subjective nature of the task was manipulated in the task’s introduction. The introduction also conceded that the participants might not have given much thought about the topics addressed in the questionnaire. As such, they would be able to have access to the answers of one of their peers.

In the judgment phase of the study, participants were paired ostensibly with a partner who was either in-group or out-group, and of minority or majority status. These factors were crossed across all conditions of the mixed factorial experimental design. The partner actually was a computer program designed to respond, on average, two-scale units higher than the participant had, on each of 15 judgment trials. If participants were influenced by the consistent upward pressure, their responses over trials would be greater, on average, than those of individuals who resisted their partner’s influence. A final block of five “private” trials also was administered. On these judgments, no information from the programmed confederate was transmitted.

Results of the analysis of responses on the 15 public trials were consistent with expectations. As predicted, immediate minority influence occurred as a main effect: the programmed minority’s estimates had a stronger effect on judgments than did the estimates ostensibly emanating from a majority source. However, this observation was qualified by an interaction effect. When majority group participants perceived the task as involving objective judgments, they were especially susceptible to their partner, if the partner was from the minority. This interaction effect was anticipated; the majority target was predicted to be more sensitive to out-group (i.e., minority-based) communications when the task involved objective judgments, and this effect was expected to be intensified because of the minority’s enhanced salience. Minority group participants, conversely, were expected to be susceptible to majority sources when making an objective judgment, and

they were; however, this effect was not as great, as the majority source was not expected to capture attention as powerfully as the minority.

On subjective judgments, a different pattern emerged. Participants of minority status were more influenced by an in-group (i.e., minority) source. However, for participants of majority status, no reliable difference emerged in their susceptibility to information attributed to a response partner of either majority or minority status. As before, this pattern is consistent with salience-based expectations. In circumstances involving a subjective judgment, majority group participants were predicted to be more susceptible to in-group (i.e., majority) information sources. However, this tendency was countered by the salience of the minority source. In this case, the two influences worked in opposition and cancelled difference that might have emerged as a result of exposure to in-group or out-group influence sources.

In summary, in attitude or norm formation contexts, the minority source enjoys an advantage owing to its salience. This advantage is intensified when the task involves an objective choice or the message topic/social issue is perceived as objective. As participants in Crano and Hannual-Bral's (1994) study could not have held strong positions on the judgments tapped in Pettigrew's (1958) scale, it would seem that this research is properly classified as a study of response norm formation. The results of this study clearly point to at least one circumstance in which the minority may have an immediate (vs. delayed) impact, and as noted earlier, this circumstance may prove useful in explicating findings in the minority influence literature that are contrary to expectations of conversion theory. When the issue under consideration is novel, or when the strength of the attitude under attack is weak (Petty & Krosnick, 1995), the minority appears to hold a persuasive advantage. In circumstances such as these, influence targets generally will not be strongly motivated to counterargue, and the relative advantage owned by the minority by virtue of its rarity (and hence, salience) results in its greater influence power. These researches highlights the importance of the subjective or objective nature of the task, along with the status of the influence source and the sources's in-group or out-group identity in contexts involving attitude or norm formation. Future research should investigate these effects in contexts where minority-majority group members are interacting face-to-face during group decision making, or outside the laboratory.

*Context/Comparison Considerations: Minority/Majority Effects
in Attitude Change*

The discussion to this point was concerned with attitude or norm formation. What is expected in situations in which a strong or established belief is attacked by a minority or the majority group? As before, we judge the main effects orientation of this question to be oversimplified. The factors that affected majority and minority

influence in attitude formation contexts must be considered in attitude change contexts as well. These factors include, among others, the subjective or objective nature of the task, the in-group or out-group nature of the influence source, and the strength of the minority or majority's message. Failure to consider these features during attitude change may, at minimum, result in an impoverished understanding of the complex interplay of forces that determine the outcome of a persuasion experience.

Subjective issues. For subjective judgments in attitude change contexts, the discussion to this point strongly suggests that the in-group will enjoy an initial advantage. Thus, members of the majority would be more susceptible to majority group influence in subjective contexts, and minority group members more susceptible to members of the minority. This initial advantage is shown in Figure 1. In these circumstances, this advantage would be immediate.

The question of persistence of attitude change then arises. On the basis of considerable evidence gathered in research on dual process models (Chaiken & Trope, 1999), it is reasonable to predict that persistence would depend on the motivation of the target to elaborate the source's information, and the quality of that information. If the target was not particularly exorcized by the issue at hand, it is unlikely that the source's message would be scrutinized closely. In that instance, the initial in-group advantage would hold, and the quality of the message would not matter much. Changes that occurred would be the result of heuristic processing, and would be manifest immediately. However, the resultant attitude would be weak. Weak attitudes are not persistent, are easy to change, and are unlikely to impel action (Petty & Krosnick, 1995).

A different outcome may be anticipated when the issue is highly relevant (Crano, 1995, 1997; Crano & Burgoon, 2001). In this case, the target would attend closely to the source's message. As before, the in-group would be favored, and with strong messages, the resultant attitude would be strong, persistent, resistant to counterpressure, and impel action. In high elaboration conditions, a strong message from a favored source (majority sources for majority targets, minority sources for minority targets) would cause immediate and persistent change.

Importance of the subjective/objective distinction. It is important to understand the specifics of these predictions. The expectations outlined thus far are expected to hold only for issues that are experienced as involving subjective choices. Subjective (and objective) issues, as conceptualized here, are self-defined and based on individual perception (see Crano, 1994; Crano & Hannula-Bral, 1994; Gorenflo & Crano, 1989). This definition differs from others that view the task or issue as inherently subjective or objective (Laughlin & Ellis, 1986; Pérez & Mugny, 1996). Subjective issues concern choices perceived as involving personal preferences or palate, not verifiable, right or wrong judgments—which is the

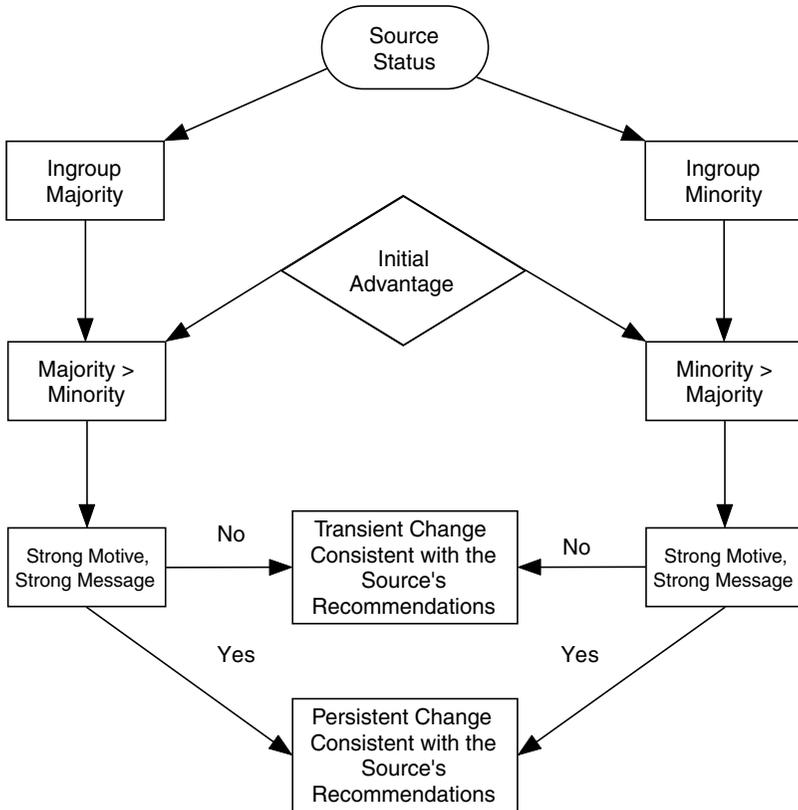


Fig. 1. Attitude change: Minority and majority influence expectations for subjective judgments.

better flavor of ice cream, chocolate or vanilla, the better color of automobile, red or yellow, the tastier pizza? Issues perceived as corrigible, as capable of correction, do not fall into the category we label as subjective. One cannot set right another's preference for Coke over Pepsi, or ask whether or not the preference is correct. The probative value of the preference is fundamentally immaterial. Defined in this way, subjective issues typically are not viewed by the perceiver as involving life or death decisions, and as such, generally do not generate feelings of high vested interest (Lehman & Crano, 2002). There are exceptions to this rule, but these exceptions are rare. One such exception could be perceptions of abortion. Some prochoice individuals may perceive abortion as an individual choice or a subjective decision, instead of one that entails a definite right or wrong position, and still hold this issue with vested interest. On the majority of subjective issues, however, this is not the case. On issues low vested interest, social influence, should it

occur, generally would not induce strong allegiance to the induced position (Crano, 1995).

On objective issues, the perception or belief exists that there is a right or wrong position. Many social issues are probably perceived to be objective. For instance, an individual who is completely convinced that stem-cell research is wrong, that it must be abolished, and that there are compelling reasons for this position, may be seen as holding a view that is self-defined as objective. Unlike subjective judgments, as defined here, objective judgments are more likely to be vested and held with some degree of conviction or passion. As such, these judgments may prove more difficult to change; however, once changed, the changes are more likely to persist, and to motivate attitude-consistent action.

As shown in Figure 2, the dynamics of minority or majority induced attitude change are considerably more complex in contexts involving issues perceived as objective (vs. subjective). In conversion theory, the majority is thought to impart influence by threat of ridicule or ostracism. Its effects are predicted to persist so long as the majority can maintain surveillance. This is a sensible position, but it begs a number of questions. For example, why should targets care if, say, 88% of a particular group feels a particular way about a position, or judges a particular slide to be green rather than blue? In these cases, there is no direct or implied threat; and little chance the majority is watching the hapless judge. If majority influence truly depends on pressure and surveillance, it would seem that mass-mediated majority appeals would not stand much chance, yet there is plenty of evidence that such messages can have profound effects. Nor would it seem possible for minorities who can demonstrate the correctness of their position to prevail, yet they often do (Kerr, 2001; Smith, Tindale, & Anderson, 2001).

Two added problems with the conversion theory vis-à-vis the data at hand is that it does not allow for persistent change when majority surveillance is relaxed, and it does not explain why the majority sometimes fails to exert any influence whatsoever. The leniency contract, a subset of the context/comparison model, was developed to address these theoretical shortcomings. This model depicts the theoretical decision points that must be traversed on the route to resistance or change.

Majority influence on objective issues. The model begins with the assumption that on objective judgments, attributing a counterattitudinal communication to a source of majority or minority status initiates a series of regular, systematic, and predictable cognitive responses. Mentioning the majority or minority status of an influence source changes the persuasion context from cold cognitive elaboration to one involving interpersonal issues of social identity and group belongingness. Therefore, whether a majority or minority is an in-group or out-group may alter the persuasion landscape for a group member. Merely mentioning the minority or majority status of a source triggers issues of social categorization—the

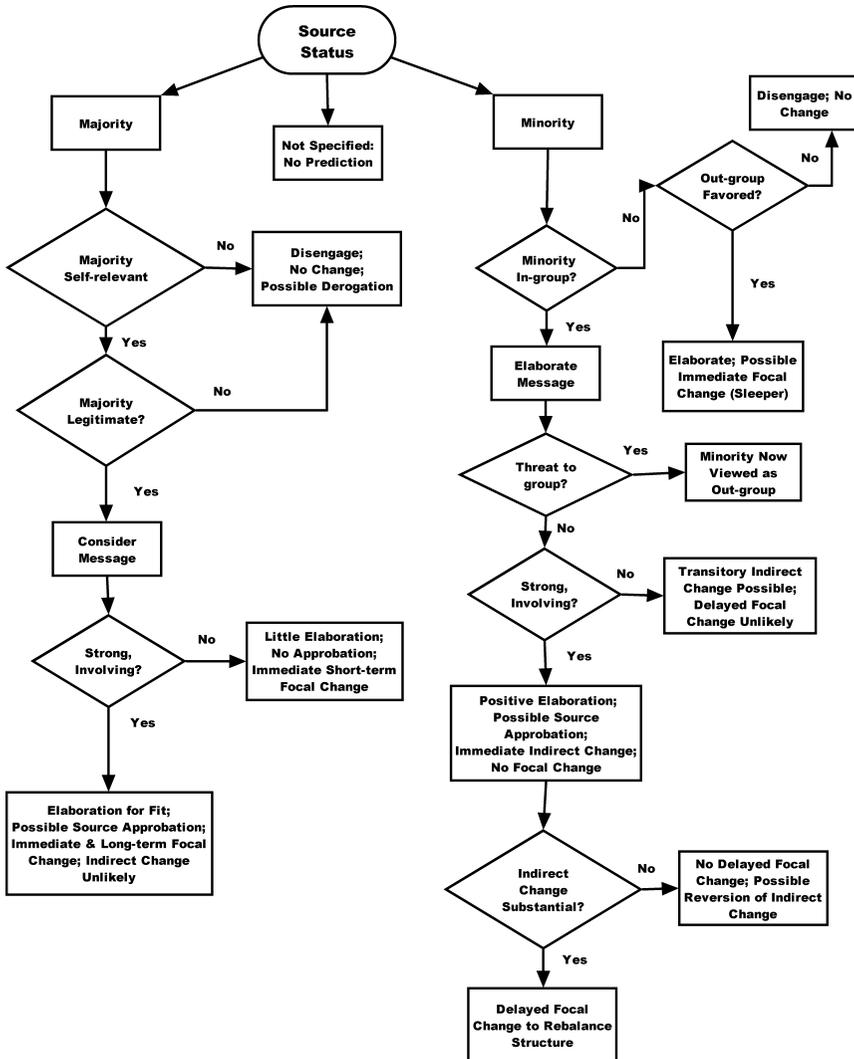


Fig. 2. Attitude change: Minority and majority influence expectations for Objective judgments (Le-niency contract model).

communicator is seen as either a majority or minority source that represents an in-group or an out-group member. Take, for example, a counterattitudinal message from one Democratic Party member (source) to another (target). If the message represents a numerical minority point of view among democrats, the target would likely categorize the source as an in-group minority.

In-group majority or minority counterattitudinal messages may activate intragroup processes, while out-group majority or minority counterattitudinal messages may stimulate intergroup processes. In an intragroup situation, conflict may involve the expectation of agreement and pressures toward in-group cooperation. At an intergroup level, conflict may reflect a sense of threat or social competition (e.g., discrimination) between groups, and cooperation may be less central unless common goals are involved. However, as we discuss below, the distinction between intragroup and intergroup processes can become blurred (see Dovidio et al., this volume) when an in-group minority poses a threat to the viability of the group.

Furthermore, involving the self-concept in persuasion changes the context from one of information processing to valenced and motivated elaboration, because succumbing to, or resisting, an influence source may have implications for one's self-definition. As a consequence, whether the source is an in-group or out-group may determine the extent of cognitive elaboration of a message and subsequent attitude change. As David and Turner (1999, 2001a) demonstrated, whether a minority or majority source is construed as an in-group or an out-group affects how individuals respond to counterattitudinal messages. These researchers demonstrated that in-groups possess greater influence potential than out-groups (see also Turner, 1991).

To understand the approach taken, let us begin with considerations of people's responses to influence levied by the majority on issues deemed objective by the influence target. The left side of the model in Figure 2 outlines a series of decision points that allow prediction of transient, lasting, or no compliance to majority influence. The model suggests that when confronted with pronouncements attributed to the majority, people first decide whether the majority group is self-relevant (Crano, 2001); does membership in the majority play a role in the individual's social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986)? If the majority does not have consequences for one's self-definition (low self-relevance), then majority pressure to adopt a counterattitudinal position will fail. Suppose an individual were exposed to a counterattitudinal message on the death penalty attributed to a low self-relevant majority. That message would not have much persuasive force because the majority is not particularly important to the individual sense of self. There is little, if any, potential intraindividual or intragroup conflict involved if the individual does not comply, and losing group membership would probably provoke only a shrug of the shoulders. As such, there is no real need to cooperate or to be open to alternate ideas or suggestions (see King et al., this volume). However, suppose the group is important to the target's identity. The next decision point concerns the legitimacy of majority pressure. Is the majority a legitimate source of influence on the topic at hand? Perceptions of legitimacy depend on whether the issue is pertinent to the majority group and its scope of knowledge and concerns (Crano, 2001). A member of a research team, for example, might

well be influenced by the group's consensual decision to use Times New Roman font for a research article, even though the individual might favor Verdana. In this instance, majority pressure might be judged legitimate, thus encouraging elaboration. However, suppose the majority of the research team were to argue that it was the duty of all members to endorse a particular religious affiliation. The target might feel that one's religious affiliation and research were not mutually relevant, and thus the pressure exerted by the research team was illegitimate. In that instance, the attempt would fail. The target would disengage from the group, psychologically if not physically, and no change would occur. Indeed, research by Tormala and Petty (2002, 2004) on the ramifications of successful resistance suggests that in some circumstances, the majority might lose value in the eyes of the unmoved influence target, and might find its subsequent persuasion attempts met with strong resistance.

Suppose, however, that the majority's counterattitudinal message is judged both self-relevant and legitimate. Then, the target will consider the message carefully and message strength becomes important. Elaboration of a weak message will result in a weak response. The targeted individual will change in response to the message, given its self-relevance and legitimacy, but the change will not persist. If the message is strong, elaboration will produce both immediate and persistent change on the focal issue. Past research provides empirical evidence of these effects (e.g., Baker & Petty, 1994; Crano & Chen, 1998; De Dreu & De Vries, 1993; Mackie, 1987). Such change will not spread to related beliefs, because the elaboration that occurs in this circumstance is an *elaboration for fit*, rather than an *elaboration for gist*. Its purpose is not to absorb the essence of the message, but to determine how to act so as to bolster one's membership in the group (for detail, see Crano & Alvaro, 1998a,b). The work of Prislin et al. (2000, 2002) demonstrates the strong pull of majority membership (see also Jacobs, Christensen, & Prislin, this volume). The motive for elaboration here is to learn how best to present oneself to ensure continued group approval, or put another way, to cooperate with the majority. For this reason, even if the majority's message is adopted, it will not influence related beliefs, because its adoption is motivated by concerns for self-presentation rather than validity.

Minority influence on objective issues. The picture changes considerably when the counterattitudinal message is attributed to a minority. In this case, pressure to comply is minimal. This is not to say that the minority cannot persuade. In minority influence, the target's principal reaction is to determine the status of the minority. Is the minority an in-group? If not (see Figure 2), a series of follow-on decisions ensue. The first is concerned with a specification of the out-group categorization. Is the out-group favored? If not, its message is dismissed (see David & Turner, 1999; 2001a, b); its impact is so trivial that its rejection is not translated into further out-group rejection. For example, an antidrug message from a

disfavored out-group minority group probably would not have much persuasive power. If the out-group is favored, its position is considered, and may have an immediate effect, which fades over time as it is not based on strong elaboration. Favored out-groups are groups of high status or of high regard, but they do not play a role in the target's identity. The types of sources used by Hovland, Janis, and Kelley (1953) in studies of high source credibility fit this description (e.g., J. Robert Oppenheimer speaking on the feasibility of nuclear submarines in the 1950s represented a favored out-group—at least for those who were not renowned physicists).

If the minority is in-group, a different process is evoked. A counterattitudinal message delivered by a member of one's in-group is surprising precisely because it is nonnormative. As such, the receiver is motivated to understand why the message was delivered and what it entails—in short, to elaborate it. The first goal of elaboration is concerned with the existence of the group in light of the in-group counternormative communication. If the group serves a social identity function, it is important that it remain viable. Thus, a central concern is whether or not the message is a threat to the group's existence. If it is, and the minority cannot be dissuaded, its message is rejected and the in-group minority is redefined as out-group (Kerr, 2002; Kerr & Tindale, 2004). The response to turncoats often is extreme (Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988).

Such extreme responses are rare, however, probably because in-group minorities seldom propose positions that threaten to destroy the groups from which they themselves derive their identities (Alvaro & Crano, 1996) and in-group attitude variability is an anticipated part of group life (Jones, Wood, & Quattrone, 1981; Worchel, Grossman, & Coutant, 1994), especially in majority groups (Mullen & Hu, 1989). In the more common case, in which the minority's message is not seen as a threat to the group's viability, the next decision point concerns the strength of the message itself. With Petty and Cacioppo (1986), the leniency model holds that message strength plays a major role in determining the course of persuasion. Elaborating a weak message will have relatively little effect. The focal (or direct) attitude will not be changed. Possibly, related issues might be swayed in the direction of the gist of the message, but these changes will be transitory. However, suppose the message is strong and persuasive. Although focal change will not transpire, attitudes related to the focal issue will be affected. This prediction gives the leniency contract its name. The model holds that by virtue of its group membership, the in-group minority will stimulate relatively open-minded elaboration of its message. For this same reason, it is unlikely that the message source will be derogated. After all, the minority is in-group, part and parcel of one's own identity. To derogate the minority would be to derogate oneself. Under these conditions—open-minded elaboration without derogation—we might expect immediate focal change to ensue. It does not. The model predicts a lack of apparent effect, the result of an implied contract between the in-group minority and the majority receivers.

This leniency contract stipulates a reasonable and courteous (lenient) hearing of the minority's position. In this way, the viability and cohesion of the group is maintained, much as politeness theory suggests strategies interactants use to facilitate social interchange (Brown, 1990). In recompense (this is, after all, a contract), the majority and minority implicitly understand that change is unlikely. Thus, the minority is accommodated, in that it is given a hearing without derogation, and the majority helps ensure the viability of the group by placating the minority while simultaneously maintaining its position.

The leniency contract may be conceived as a cooperative strategy for managing potential intragroup conflict introduced by a counternormative in-group minority. To avoid conflict and possibly group dissolution, the majority cooperates with the minority in giving the minority position a fair hearing, and the minority cooperates with the majority in its understanding that change is unlikely. In this way, the minority is given a voice in the group. It is recognized and respected by the majority, and the majority is accepted by the minority (Dovidio et al., this volume). This leniency contract need not be explicit or even conscious. It is a convention necessary for group maintenance. The contract allows considerable in-group variation on all nonvital issues, because in-group deviance is not viewed as a threat. Theoretically, cohesive groups would allow the greatest levels of in-group opinion deviance (Brewer & Brown, 1998; Capozza & Brown, 2000).

Indirect attitude change. This is not to imply that the minority is an impotent agent of change. The open-minded elaboration of a counterattitudinal message with little counterargument and no source derogation can create considerable change pressure. Although focal change (or direct) attitude change is contractually precluded, the reality of the pressure cannot be denied. The leniency model holds that this change pressure will spread to other, related, attitudes. Indirect or related attitude change, a common feature of minority influence research (Alvaro & Crano, 1997; De Dreu & De Vries, 1993, 1996; Wood et al., 1994), is a result of this spread of effect. This proposition is consistent with considerable research on cognitive structure (Anderson, 1983; Judd, Drake, Downing, & Krosnick, 1991; McGuire & McGuire, 1991), and its plausibility rests on a few easily accepted assumptions. The first is that attitudes are not held in isolation but are linked in the cognitive system. The second is that changing one attitude might have implications for other beliefs, especially those with which the modified attitude is linked strongly. Further, it is reasonable to assume that applying change pressure to one attitude might have implications for linked or proximal beliefs. Even if the targeted attitude does not change, beliefs that are related to it might. For example, Alvaro and Crano (1997) demonstrated a link between two social issues: attitudes toward homosexuals in the military and attitudes toward gun control. When pressure was exerted by an in-group minority on attitudes toward homosexuals in the military

(focal or direct attitude), the message influenced attitudes toward gun control (indirect or related change), while the focal attitude remained unscathed. This change could be both profound and insidious, insofar as one would not raise strong defenses to bolster an attitude not under attack.

Let us briefly consider another theoretical position concerning indirect change, which like the leniency contract, maintains that that indirect change is related to message processing. De Dreu, De Vries, and colleagues (1993, 1996, 1999, 2002) suggest that counterattitudinal messages from the minority stimulate heuristic processing due to consensus expectations (Mackie, 1987) unless receivers are motivated to process minority messages systematically (e.g., under high involvement conditions; De Dreu & De Vries, 1996). In such cases, minority messages will be processed divergently (Nemeth, 1994). This processing style stimulates alternate viewpoints and promotes creative thinking. When considering alternatives, people may expand on the minority's message, and this ultimately might lead to related attitude change. That minorities are associated with divergent thinking has been supported (e.g., Seyranian, Atuel, & Crano, 2008). How divergent thinking and positive elaboration are related to each other and to indirect change represents an interesting avenue for future research.

Delayed focal change. If we follow the argument of indirect change, then the leniency contract also provides an explication of delayed focal change, another feature of the minority influence literature (see Crano & Chen, 1998; David & Turner, 2001a; Wood et al., 1994). Whereas indirect or related attitude change is concerned with attitudes that are related to the focal or direct attitude, delayed focal change refers to the idea that attitude change may occur precisely on the attitude that the persuasive message is attempting to alter, but that change occurs only after the passage of time. The leniency model, which assumes a structural relationship among beliefs within the cognitive system, presupposes that large changes in one component of the structure will have implications for changes in related components. Furthermore, a major change in one belief will affect the structural integrity of the system, in effect, throwing the system out of equilibrium. How is the system to right itself? Two means readily come to mind. The changed (related) attitude may regress to its original position. When change is minor, this seems likely. The inertia of the system would prove difficult to offset. However, when indirect or related change is profound, such an easy expedient probably is not available. In that case, the structure would adjust. In theory, the attitudes most closely linked to the changed belief would become more congruous with it, thereby reestablishing equilibrium. A process like this could be expected to result in the delayed focal change that is commonly observed, and this is what Crano and Chen (1998) found. Participants who showed the greatest indirect minority induced attitude change exhibited the greatest delayed focal change. Delayed change, however, is not inevitable. It was absent in those only modestly moved

by the minority. This pattern explains why some studies on delayed focal change produce positive results, whereas others fail to find the effect.

Let us briefly review alternate explanations of delayed focal change. Tormala (2008) suggests that when sufficiently motivated, people may reflect on their own thought processes (metacognition), particularly after resisting persuasive messages. When targets think that they have illegitimately resisted persuasion due to source characteristics (i.e., a source should not be denigrated simply because it is of minority status), uncertainty of focal attitudes may result. This doubt may create vulnerability to future delayed change. David and Turner (1999, 2001a) suggest that delayed focal change occurs as a function of alternating comparative frames of reference. Measures of direct focal attitude change draw attention to the comparative differences between an in-group majority and minority. In this case, the in-group majority will be more influential. However, increased time would allow inclusion of the out-group as a frame of reference. As such, the counterattitudinal in-group minority would be considered an in-group source, allowing for more influence and ultimately, for delayed change to occur. A fruitful avenue for future research would be to examine and possibly find a common ground for these explanations (leniency contract and metacognition).

Summary

Almost all that is considered worthy of study in social psychology is linked in one way or another to questions of influence. Moscovici's (1976) emphasis on the importance of the minority in the persuasion equation helped energize the field when it had begun to lose steam. If nothing else, his insights opened a wealth of possibilities that remain to be explored. The context/comparison approach, and its allied leniency contract, is presented along with other models in hopes of furthering that exploration. In particular, the context/comparison approach draws attention to variables largely neglected in systematic study, but that arguably may have massive effects on persuasion. Considering the perceived subjective or objective nature of the task at hand, the social identity concerns of targets, the in-group or out-group nature of the influence source, the source's majority or minority status, and so on, have all been shown to affect persuasion. The model details the circumstances under which minority influence will occur, and provides a plausible explication of the social psychological underpinnings responsible for the predicted effects. It also provides an understanding of influence processes in an intragroup and intergroup context, particularly related to conflict and cooperation.

It is our hope that this exposition will stimulate others to examine the model rigorously, to expose its shortcomings, to modify and improve it in the search for a more complete understanding of the processes that cause us to change, and ultimately use the model to guide socially relevant research and practice. This

brings us to consider a larger issue: how can minority influence research be used to inform important processes of influence in the world outside the laboratory?

Practical Applications

The study of majority and minority influence is much more than just a rote and mechanistic analysis of the influence process. It speaks to a process that is visible in the very fabric of society. Majority and minority factions and influence processes exist everywhere—in work teams, organizations, political decision-making groups, soccer clubs, board meetings, community organizations, in elections, juries, advertisements, the media, classrooms, social movements, international relations, and in any type of conflict or war. The dynamic interplay of influence between these factions has been explored in research across a variety of contexts. Examples of these settings include: group decision-making (Kerr, 2001; McLeod, Baron, Marti, & Yoon, 1997; Meyers, Brashers, & Hanner, 2000; Smith et al., 2001), group performance and creativity (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992; Hackman, 1992; Nemeth, 1994), in real-world organizations (Choi & Levine, 2004; De Dreu & Beersma, 2001; De Dreu & De Vries, 1997; Van Dyne & Saavedra, 1996) and juries (Clark, 2001; Kerr & MacCoun, 1985; Nemeth, 1977), in the political realm (Levine & Kaarbo, 2001; Smith & Diven, 2002), in intergroup conflict (Maoz, 2000), and for community needs assessments (Montero, 1998).

Of these settings, the bulk of applied research attention has centered on group decision-making processes (particularly juries) and performance in the organizational realm. Consistent with the postulations of the context/comparison model, research shows that majority factions tend to possess substantial influence in decision-making groups (Smith et al., 2001), but minorities can exert influence under particular conditions. For example, the type of task may determine whether a minority may prevail (Laughlin & Ellis, 1986). Groups working on a task with a demonstrably correct solution are more likely to be influenced by a (correct) minority than groups that are making more judgmental decisions (e.g., jury decisions). In judgmental tasks, majorities have an advantage, but research suggests that the minority can still influence decisions. Clark's (1998, 2001) research on juries using the "twelve angry man paradigm" suggests that minorities may influence jury decision if they are able to secure majority defectors, or provide cogent arguments, particularly from multiple minority sources.

Minorities may also act as the forces in groups that herald innovation and help the group to surmount stagnation, or they may propose novel solutions to old problems (see also Dovidio et al., this volume). A number of studies suggest that the presence of minorities tends to increase originality of thought, creative problem-solving, and group performance (e.g., Nemeth, 1994; Nemeth & Kwan, 1985; Van Dyne & Saavedra, 1996). In a field study of organizational teams, De Dreu (2002) showed that minority dissent was related to more team innovation

and effectiveness, particularly when teams were inclined to reflect on the teams' goals and strategies (reflexivity). Minority dissent also improves the quality of decisions in both organizational teams (e.g., Peterson, Owens, Tetlock, Fan, & Martorana, 1998) and in the laboratory (e.g., Nemeth, Brown, & Rogers, 2001).

Suggestions for Future Research

Despite the wide array of settings where minority influence research has been conducted, most minority influence (and group decision-making research) has been conducted within the confines of the laboratory. More research outside the laboratory is necessary to provide a clear roadmap of the ways that minorities in the real world can prevail (see Seyranian et al., 2008). Maoz (2000) provides an instance of research on real-world majority and minority conflict and cooperation pertaining to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Three hundred Israeli and Arab teachers participated in a year-long prejudice reduction program whereby individuals from both sides met regularly to discuss and share their feelings and attitudes about Israeli-Palestinian tensions. Analysis of debate sessions revealed a dynamic whereby the Arab minority increasingly persuaded the Israeli majority about their position regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israeli (majority) teachers expressed increasingly positive attitudes toward the Arab minority and revealed a better understanding of the Arab perspective. This study corroborates research findings from experiments, and adds insights about real-world interactions and influence attempts of majority and minority factions. Research utilizing real-world majority and minority groups may be particularly insightful because many minority influence studies (and group decision-making studies) use numerical divisions of these factions that may not reflect the complexity of real-world conceptualizations of these groups. For example, a small minority does not necessarily imply a disadvantaged group (e.g., apartheid in South Africa). On the other hand, some research has emphasized the status or power differences between the majority and minority groups (e.g., Sachdev & Bourhis, 1991). The result is a fragmented literature that provides a hazy roadmap for the application of basic theory and research to applied settings.

Seyranian et al. (2008) provide evidence that majority and minority definitions in the real world are multidimensional. Based on empirical findings, Seyranian et al. propose a multidimensional typology of two majority (moral majority, elites) and two minority (powerless populace, the subjugated) groups that includes consideration of social categorization, power/status, numerical size, being a source or target of treatment, and distinctiveness. Basic research that operationalizes majority and minority groups in line with this typology in future research may more accurately reflect the real-world complexity of these groups, and facilitate practical application of research.

Minority influence research has the potential also to inform other areas, such as how to formulate policy-relevant messages to increase social welfare and reduce group conflict, or how to craft public service announcements on issues such as drug abuse, joining gangs, racism, teenage pregnancy, and safe sex (Crano & Burgoon, 2001). For example, minority influence research has informed policy issues such as affirmative action (Antonio et al., 2004), capital punishment (Smith, Dykema-Engblade, Walker, Niven, & McGough, 2000), terrorism (Davis, 2004), and smoking cessation (Pérez, Falomir, & Mugny, 1995). In formulating messages, the context/comparison approach may be employed on a variety of social issues such as global warming, gun control, attitudes toward gay marriage, stem-cell research, to name a few. The model would recommend taking into account the recipients' majority or minority status and portraying the source's majority or minority status in such a way as to encourage message processing and subsequent persuasion. As such, a message attempting to convince a majority to employ "Energy Star" appliances (to save energy) would be more effective if it was portrayed by a minority source. Minority groups attempting to bring about some type of attitude change such as persuading the majority to employ vehicles powered by alternative fuel may capitalize on in-group leniency to encourage message processing and delayed focal change, in addition to employing consistent and strong messages to influence policy decision making. Applying insights from majority and minority influence to persuasive communication may also be a fruitful arena for future research.

Concluding Remarks

Minority influence theory and research has matured to the point where it can be fruitfully applied outside the laboratory. However, more applied research is necessary to provide a clear roadmap of the ways that minorities in the real world can prevail (see Seyranian, Atuel, & Crano, 2008). Along with basic research and theory, this type of research may help to increase intragroup cooperation, and aid minority groups to provide society with innovative ideas and solutions that may foster social change (Moscovici, 1976, 1980).

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WILLIAM D. CRANO is Oskamp Professor of Psychology at Claremont Graduate University. His work has focused on persuasion, and recently on the development of models concerned with minority and majority group influence. His applied work is concerned with the application of principles of persuasion to prevention of drug abuse in children and adolescents. Outside the academy, he served as the Program Director in Social Psychology for the National Science Foundation, as Liaison Scientist for the Office of Naval Research, London, as NATO Senior Scientist, University of Southampton, and was a Fulbright Fellow to the Federal University-Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, Brazil. He has written/edited 11 books, which have been translated into three languages, more than 30 book chapters, and more than 200 scholarly articles and scientific presentations. He is the past chairman of the Society for Experimental Social Psychology, and is a Fellow of the American Psychological Association, the American Psychological Society, and the Society for Personality and Social Psychology.

VIVIANE SEYRANIAN has research interests in social psychology with an emphasis on social influence processes, group behavior, and leadership. She has coauthored multiple articles and scientific presentations in these areas, with contributions to the *European Journal of Social Psychology*, the *Leadership Quarterly*, and *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*. She earned her BA cum laude in psychology and government from Claremont McKenna College, and her MA from Claremont Graduate University where she is currently a PhD candidate in applied social psychology. She is currently an adjunct professor at Woodbury University.