CONFORMITY AND INNOVATION

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Abstract

A study was designed to permit quantitative comparisons between majority influence (conformity) and minority influence (innovation), to assess group cohesiveness and behavioral style as mediators of each form of influence, and to test the hypothesis that whereas majorities produce more manifest influence than minorities, minorities produce more latent influence than majorities. The study employed a 2 x 2 x 2 design, varying source status (majority or minority), group cohesiveness (high or low) and behavioral style (high or low consistency), and assessed influence on both the manifest and latent level. Results confirmed the greater influence of majorities on a manifest level but not of minorities on a latent level.
Social influence research has traditionally been concerned with the process of conformity or majority influence (Allen, 1965; Kiesler & Kiesler, 1969) and only recently, with the process of innovation (Levine, 1980; Moscovici, 1976). This latter research has turned the conformity question around and asked how and to what extent individuals and active minorities can influence the majority. These two forms of influence, conformity and innovation, have typically been studied by different investigators, in different experimental situations. Thus, it has been difficult to compare the processes underlying majority and minority influence and to determine the relative magnitude of their effects.

As Doms and Van Avermaet (1980) have pointed out, the most notable difference between the conformity and innovation paradigms concerns the composition of the experimental group. Whereas research on conformity investigates the effects of a majority on a single individual, innovation research looks at the effects of a minority on a group. Thus, in the innovation situation, subjects are exposed not only to the influence of the source but also to the reactions of the other targets. A solution to this problem would be to simulate the distribution of majority and minority opinions in the experimental group and to assess the effects of that distribution on a single individual (Wolf & Latané, 1981). A primary purpose of the
present research, then, was to study majority and minority influence in the context of a single experiment, with a simulated distribution of opinions in the experimental group.

Because researchers have addressed themselves to influence by only one or the other of the factions, they have arrived at highly divergent explanations of the influence process (Latané & Wolf, 1981). Explanations of majority influence focus on the dependence of individuals upon the group either for information or for the material and psychological benefits the group can provide (Jones & Gerard, 1967). Among the variables thought to increase the dependence of individuals upon the group, cohesiveness has received the most experimental attention (Berkowitz, 1954; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Festinger, 1950; Thibaut & Strickland, 1956). There is recent evidence, however, that cohesiveness also mediates minority influence (Wolf, 1979). The question that remains is whether cohesiveness is quantitatively a more important determinant of majority influence than of minority influence (Latané & Wolf, 1981).

Since majorities are seldom in a position of dependence upon the minority, Moscovici and his colleagues have argued that dependence cannot be the mechanism by which minority influence operates (Moscovici & Faucheux, 1972; Moscovici & Nemeth, 1974). Rather they propose that behavioral style, the consistency and confidence with which the influence source presents his opinions, is the decisive factor in minority influence. Again it is possible that behavioral style also
mediates the effects of majority influence but its relative importance for the two influence sources remains to be determined. A second purpose of the present research, then, was to compare the effects of group cohesiveness and behavioral style on conformity and innovation.

Moscovici (1980) has recently proposed that majority and minority influence differ not quantitatively but qualitatively. He suggests that whereas majorities have their greatest impact on manifest or behavioral responses, minorities produce their strongest influence on the latent or cognitive-perceptual level underlying the manifest response. While Moscovici has presented some evidence in favor of this proposition (Moscovici & Lage, 1976; Moscovici & Personnaz, 1980), other studies have challenged its validity (Doms & Van Avermaet, 1980; Sorrentino, King & Leo, 1980). A final purpose of the present research, then, was to provide a further test of Moscovici's interesting hypothesis, using a new and more realistic measure of latent influence (Wolf, 1979).

In summary, the present study was designed to permit quantitative comparisons between majority and minority influence, to assess the relative effects of group cohesiveness and behavioral style as mediators of each form of influence, and to test the hypothesis that whereas majorities produce more manifest influence than minorities, minorities produce more latent influence than majorities. The study employed a 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects design, varying source status (majority or minority), group cohesiveness (high or low) and behavioral style (high or low consistency), and assessed influence on both the manifest and latent level.
Method

Subjects
The subjects were 128 female undergraduates who were paid $3.00 for their participation in the 90-minute study of "mock juries". The responses of 32 subjects were not included in the analyses of the data due to an a priori decision to exclude subjects whose initial judgments on the experimental issue fell outside of a prescribed range. Thus, there were 12 subjects in each of the experimental conditions.

Procedure
The subjects were run in groups of four and asked to play the role of jurors deliberating on a civil case. Under the pretext that the study involved verbal and nonverbal communication, they discussed the case by exchanging notes and were separated from one another by barriers.

Cohesiveness manipulation. Prior to deliberation, subjects introduced themselves and talked about their interests, activities in school and so forth. They then indicated their impression of each other "juror" on a scale ranging from -5 (Dislike) to +5 (Like). Two levels of cohesiveness were created by later providing subjects with bogus information about these ratings. Whereas high cohesive subjects learned that group members had rated one another very positively, low cohesive subjects learned that the ratings were quite negative.

Following the introductions, barriers were erected and subjects were given a trial transcript and an identification letter from A to D. In fact, all subjects were B and Jurors A, C and D were represented by means of prewritten communications.
At this point, subjects rendered an initial judgment on the case, which involved a repairman who had been injured in the defendant's home. The facts of the case were weighted to encourage an initial judgment between 15 and 45 thousand dollars and subjects whose judgments were not in that range were excluded from the analyses.

Source status manipulation. Subjects began their deliberation by writing a first note about the case on a set of carbon papers (permitting 3 copies of each note to be produced simultaneously; one for each of the other jurors). So that the jurors "would know where everyone stood on the case", a bogus distribution of initial judgments was provided for each subject, according to the following schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Minority Influence Conditions</th>
<th>Majority Influence Conditions</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Juror A: S's judgment + $3,000</td>
<td>Juror A: $7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juror B: S's judgment</td>
<td>Juror B: S's judgment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juror C: $5,000</td>
<td>Juror C: $5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juror D: S's judgment - $2,000</td>
<td>Juror D: $2,000</td>
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In effect, this study was concerned with the influence of bogus Juror C on the naive subject B. In half the conditions, Juror C maintained the majority viewpoint, shared by Jurors A and D, of a minimal compensation for the plaintiff. In the other conditions, Juror C advocated the minority viewpoint, not shared by any of the other group members, of a minimal compensation. It may be noted that in both conditions, the range of majority opinions was $5,000 and the range of group opinions varied from $13,000 to $43,000, depending upon the subject's initial judgment.
Consistency manipulation. After the subjects finished writing their first notes, they were collected by the experimenter, who replaced them with prewritten notes signed by Jurors A, C and D and redistributed them. After reading the notes ostensibly written by the other jurors, subjects wrote a second note about the case. In all, the deliberation consisted of four such exchanges. The notes from Jurors A and D raised very general issues about the case, without referring to a specific amount of compensation. The notes from Juror C, on the other hand, all supported her contention that $5,000 was the appropriate amount. The consistency manipulation was contained in the fourth and final note from Juror C. In the High Consistent conditions, these notes ended, "I still think $5,000 is the fairest judgment", whereas in the Low Consistent conditions they ended, "I thought $5,000 was the fairest judgment but now I'm not so sure".

Following the fourth exchange of notes, subjects rendered a final, anonymous judgment about the case and completed a post-experimental questionnaire containing checks on the effectiveness of the manipulations and measures assessing the subjects' perceptions of the other group members.

Before the subjects were debriefed, they were asked to complete a short, ostensibly unrelated task. They were told that a lawyer who had been helping us with the study had asked us to collect some information for him about how people view the severity of different types and degrees of punishment. The subjects filled out a three-page questionnaire containing a series of 21-point scales. On the first page, included to divert
suspicion, subjects rated the severity of different prison terms. On the second and third pages, they rated the severity of different fines and the usefulness to a defendant of different compensation awards. These latter questions assessed subjects' perceptions of the value of money and were included as measures of latent influence. Subjects who had been influenced by Juror C on a latent level should have viewed the fines as more severe and the compensation awards as more useful than subjects who had not been so influenced.

Results

Although the subjects interacted with one another, they were separated by barriers prior to the introduction of the experimental manipulations and were presumed to be independent for the purpose of statistical analysis.

Effectiveness of the Manipulations

Cohesiveness. On 21-point scales, subjects indicated how much they liked the other members of the jury as a group and how much they thought the other group members liked them. Unfortunately, analyses revealed no effects of the cohesiveness manipulation on these measures. Although the present manipulation has been used successfully in previous research (Wolf, 1979), its failure in this study prevents us from drawing conclusions about the effects of cohesiveness.

Consistency. The manipulation of consistency was highly effective in creating differential perceptions of confidence,
\( F (1,88) = 30.57, p < .0001 \), and willingness to compromise with the group, \( F (1,88) = 21.82, p < .0001 \). When she was consistent, Juror C was seen as more confident of her opinions (\( \bar{X} = 14.4 \)) and less willing to compromise with the group (\( \bar{X} = 6.1 \)) than when she was inconsistent (\( \bar{X} = 8.5 \) and \( \bar{X} = 11.0 \), respectively). Thus, the consistency manipulation resulted in the attributional consequences necessary to test hypotheses about behavioral style.

**Source status.** On 21-point scales, subjects indicated the similarity of each other juror's initial judgment to her own. Results on these measures indicate that subjects attended to the information they were given about the distribution of opinions in the group. Since she advocated the same $5,000 figure in all conditions, we expected no effects on the measure concerning the similarity of Juror C and indeed we found none. The reported judgments of Jurors A and D, on the other hand, were similar to those of the subjects in the Minority Source conditions and different in the Majority Source conditions. Analyses of variance yielded main effects for source status on the measure concerning Juror A, \( F (1,87) = 33.02, p < .0001 \), and on the measure concerning Juror D, \( F (1,87) = 39.38, p < .0001 \). Juror A was seen as more similar in the Minority Source conditions (\( \bar{X} = 15.2 \)) than in the Majority Source conditions (\( \bar{X} = 9.1 \)). Likewise, Juror D was seen as more similar in the Minority Source conditions (\( \bar{X} = 15.4 \)) than in the Majority Source conditions (\( \bar{X} = 8.4 \)). The manipulation, therefore, was successful.
Majority and Minority Influence

Manifest influence. Subjects rendered compensation judgments both before and following the group interaction. Since the final measure was anonymous, a change in judgment in the direction of a decreased compensation award reflects an internalized acceptance of the position espoused by Juror C.

Analysis of the judgment change data revealed a main effect for source status, $F(1, 88) = 16.34$, $p < .0001$. When the minimal compensation award advocated by Juror C represented a majority position in the group, subjects reduced their judgments by an average of $10,760. When the minimal award advocated by Juror C represented a minority opinion in the group, on the other hand, the average reduction in judgments was only $3,260. There were no effects for group cohesiveness or for behavioral style, nor were there any interactions involving those variables. While the absence of an effect for cohesiveness may be due to the failure of the experimental manipulation, the absence of an effect for behavioral style poses problems for Moscovici's theory.

Perceived influence. In order to determine whether subjects thought that other group members had changed their judgments over the course of the deliberation, they were asked to estimate the final judgment of each of the other jurors. From these perceived final judgments the initial judgments, as reported to subjects on the initial judgment distribution sheet, were subtracted, resulting in perceived judgment change scores for bogus jurors A, C and D.
Analyses of variance yielded main effects for source status on the measures concerning Juror A, $F(1, 86) = 48.26$, $p < .0001$, and Juror D, $F(1, 86) = 17.92$, $p < .0001$. In the Majority Source conditions, where these bogus jurors initially favored a minimal compensation award, they were both seen as moving toward a higher judgment. Juror A was perceived to increase her judgment by $2550$, and Juror D, by $5660$. In the Minority Source conditions, where these jurors initially favored a generous compensation award, Juror A was perceived to decrease her judgment by $4150$, while virtually no change was seen on the part of Juror D.

Analysis of the measure concerning bogus Juror C revealed both a main effect for source status, $F(1, 86) = 7.19$, $p < .009$, and a main effect for consistency, $F(1, 86) = 32.20$, $p < .0001$. The interaction of these variables was also significant, $F(1, 86) = 8.29$, $p < .005$. The pattern of means demonstrates that when she was highly consistent, Juror C was not seen as changing her judgment in either the Majority Source or the Minority Source conditions, again attesting to the effectiveness of the consistency manipulation. When she was inconsistent, on the other hand, Juror C was perceived to increase her judgment by $2580$, in the Majority Source condition and by $7190$, in the Minority Source condition.

The overall pattern of results on these measures indicates that in all conditions, the group was perceived as moving toward a consensus. However, the group was seen as coming closer to achieving that consensus in the Majority Source conditions than in the Minority Source conditions.
Latent influence. Embedded in the "questionnaire for the lawyer" were measures concerning the penalty value of a $5,000 and a $25,000 fine and the utility value of a $5,000 and a $25,000 compensation award. These items concerned the perception of the value of money and were included as measures of latent influence. The $5,000 figure represented the critical stimulus employed in the original influence situation and $25,000 reflected a normative initial judgment in the original influence situation. Subjects who had been influenced on a cognitive-perceptual level should have viewed the fines as more severe and the awards as more useful than subjects who had not been so influenced.

Unfortunately, no significant effects emerged on any of these measures, casting doubt upon Moscovici's hypothesis. There are two possible explanations for the lack of results: either no influence was produced on the latent level or majorities and minorities produce comparable levels of such influence (cf. Doms & Van Avermaet, 1980). Since we did not obtain premeasures on these items, nor did we include an appropriate control condition, we cannot determine which of these alternatives is correct. In any case, Moscovici's notion that minorities produce more latent influence than majorities receives no support from the present findings.

Discussion

The primary purpose of the present investigation was to compare the influence produced by majorities and minorities in
a single experiment. Not unexpectedly, majorities were found to be more influential than minorities, at least on measures of manifest influence. In fact, a majority of three produced about three times as much influence as a minority of one. Latane and Wolf (1981) have recently argued that influence by either a majority or a minority should be a function of its size. The present data confirm their speculation.

There is little evidence that the influence produced by either the majority or the minority was mediated by the behavioral style of the influence source. Although the consistency manipulation resulted in the appropriate attributions, the present data challenge Moscovici's position that consistency is a source of influence pressure.

Finally, Moscovici's hypothesis that minorities produce more latent influence than majorities was not supported by the present findings. The question that remains is whether majorities produce comparable levels of change on the latent level or whether perceptual change is an unlikely result of influence processes.

Further research is necessary to clarify the results on the latent influence items and to test the effects of group cohesiveness as a mediator of majority and minority influence. The present results do, however, attest to the viability of the present paradigm for investigating these issues.
Footnote

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References


