A suggested revision and extension of Moscovici's theory of minority influence

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All science is a work in progress. There is no doubt that the products of our scientific endeavors, as compelling as they may be, will be replaced by other works in progress, which under the most optimal of circumstances may profit from our earlier efforts. Through his work, which this volume celebrates, examines, and hopefully extends, Serge Moscovici bore witness to his understanding of this fact, which exposes the fundamental plight of all scientists – we seek the Holy Grail of truth and certainty but are destined never to succeed in our quest. All of our work contains within it an implicit if unknown expiration date, at which time it will be replaced by evidence that directly or by implication highlights its limitations. For some, like the great Isaac Newton, that date was centuries in the making (see Crano & Lac, 2012); for others, expiration occurs almost immediately upon initial exposure to the light of scientific critique. We recognize these facts and seek to attain greater longevity by founding our work on the best available evidence. In this sense Moscovici proved masterful, insofar as his work always was predicated on the best the field had to offer. This is not to diminish his creativity or the originality of his thought, which often turned the received orthodoxy on its ear, nor to argue that past work was near to perfection. Rather, it is to draw attention to Moscovici's modus operandi as a scientist. In all his work, Moscovici proved unable or unwilling to take on small challenges or challengers; rather, he inevitably chose to confront the best ideas available in the science with his own ideas and understandings, thereby testing the plausibility and legitimacy of his – and others' – visions (Moscovici, 1976, 1980, 1985).

This chapter, indeed this book, is predicated on the assumption that we attempt to follow this canons of science in our own work, to wrestle with giants, and so to build our science on the strongest foundations possible, expanding and refining what was produced, and ultimately fostering the sometimes slow but inexorable growth of

psychological knowledge. In our field, as in all fields of empirical science, we progress from ignorance to uncertainty to systematic observation to uncertain postulation to test, analysis, and cautious confidence. This normative growth pattern of our non-paradigmatic science is developed best by building on validated measures and strong theory coupled with rigorous research methods and design and subsequent replicative research (Brewer & Crano, 2014). This approach, which is evident in the variety of works presented in this appreciation of Moscovici's vast oeuvre, may result in *truths* of lasting value. Truth is emphasized because of it is used colloquially here; the scientific method does not establish the truth, which, based on Kuhn (1996) and Popper's (1959) incisive thoughts regarding the nature of scientific evidence, is viewed as a precious but unreachable goal, only to be approached, never attained through the scientific method. Truth resides in the realm of theologians, priests, and poets. It is not a proper neighborhood for scientists (Crano, Brewer, & Lac, 2015).With this orientation in mind, and as a grateful and respectful admirer of Moscovici's work, but cognizant of our scientific obligations to advance the field, I offer the observations and arguments that follow, while cleaving closely to the evidence base of experimental social psychology.

1 Minority Influence: Precursors and Early Development

This book celebrates two of Moscovici's many seminal ideas, both of which have had enormous influence in psychological and sociological thought worldwide. In this chapter, I am specifically concerned with one of his major insights, his theory of social influence, with special emphasis on minority influence, which is concerned with processing in a persuasive minority's success or failure in its petitions and demands addressed to a more powerful group (hereafter, the majority) to accede to its views. I have discussed majority influence elsewhere, and so will not repeat that discussion (Crano, 2017). Moscovici's model of minority influence has come to be called conversion theory, insofar as at the most general level, it presupposes a) a conflict between what is known or perceived directly from what is known or perceived and communicated by others, and in resolving the conflict, b) the influence source converts the targets of its influence to its way of perceiving, thinking, or believing (Crano & Seyranian, 2007, 2009; Martin & Hewstone, 2008; Moscovici, 1976, 1980). The conflict is motivated by the goal of convincing (i.e., converting) others to the point that they accept the validity of one's position, thereby abandoning their own prior established beliefs or perceptions.

The standard approach in Moscovici's and most other social influence studies involves two critical elements: naïve observers are placed in situations with which they have little to no prior experience; and, in this unusual context, a conflict is presented between what is seen or held as true and what is communicated by a social source or sources (Crano, 1970). Conversion theory did just this: it asked participants in a group to make a series of trivially easy if unusual judgments, which were opposed by an external source of socially supplied information.

Although following the usual social influence format, Moscovici's studies promoted and tested a revolutionary model of influence, insofar as the usual source of perceptual

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conflict in past research resided firmly in the majority, not the minority. Moscovici did not follow that path, substituting the roles of influence source and influence target. The formative methodological themes of Sherif and Asch were the predicates of Moscovici's work, but his investigations improved upon the methodology of Asch's studies, and in so doing, clarified the processes underlying the means by which social influence is imposed, no matter the apparent firepower of the influence agents. At the time of his original series of publications on minority influence, the ideas Moscovici advanced caused enormous reactions in the field, both positive and negative. This response to his provocative research did not occur by accident, nor, one believes, was it unintended.

2 Fundamentals of Conversion Theory

Moscovici's early work on the influence of a minority on majority group members' reported perceptions drew clearly from Asch's studies, but improved upon the methods Asch used to investigate conformity, a central theme in social psychology (Asch, 1956, 1961). Like Asch's groundbreaking research, Moscovici's early social influence work began with an apparently simple study of perception, much like Asch's line judgment task and Muzafer Sherif's autokinetic illusion-based investigations on the methods and substance of norm formation (Sherif, 1935, 1936; Sherif, 1947, 1954). Moscovici's work showed that through social communicative means, a small minority could influence the perceptions, or perceptual reports of naïve subjects (Moscovici & Lage, 1976, 1978; Moscovici, Lage, & Naffrechoux, 1969).

The goal of Moscovici's early research on minority influence was to learn in a group influence situation whether or not a unitary minority of the respondent group could influence the perceptual reports of the larger group of naïve research participants on judgments whose correct answer was patently obvious, as was the case in Asch's earlier work. In this research, Moscovici turned the tables on the Asch tradition by asking whether or not a confederate minority could influence some of the members of the naïve majority. In Moscovici's studies, the minority's task was to induce the majority to report that an obviously blue stimulus object was green (Moscovici & Lage, 1976, 1978; Moscovici *et al.*, 1969). Could this be done? The answer to this apparently unusual question is "Yes." Using and refining the standard social influence group-responding approach pioneered by Asch, Moscovici found that a minority that consistently reported a perceptual response at odds with 98.5% of an untreated control group's estimates could influence their fellow (but naïve) respondents to conform on some of the judgment trials. The effect size of the minority's influence process was not great, but it must be remembered that the social influence processes were designed to affect the reports of fundamental visual perceptions; that is, to inspire majority group members to report that blue was green.

Moscovici's minority influence findings raised some of the same objections that had bedeviled Asch's work over the years; that is, did the conforming respondents truthfully report their perceptions, or were they merely "going along" with the confederates to avoid confrontation? In Asch's case, this question was fraught with hazard, because the social pressure on the naïve subject was extreme, and there was very little

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in the way of hard evidence to answer it. In Moscovici's studies, the objection is considerably less weighty, insofar as the source of influence was in the respondent group's minority, and as such had little power to castigate or ostracize those who resisted its explicit appeals (Williams, 2001). These powers reside in the majority, not the minority (Seyranian, Atuel, & Crano, 2008). Even so, the issue was important to address, and Moscovici did so in a famous, if controversial and elegantly designed study, whose results were interpreted as showing that individuals who appeared resolutely, if perhaps only publically resistant to the perceptual reports of a minority group (confederates), nevertheless showed clear evidence of influence effects in responses that were not consciously controlled (Moscovici & Personnaz, 1980).[1] The indirect minority effect that was reported in this study was to play an important role in the furtherance of theories of minority influence, even though the results of the study were met with considerable resistance, insofar as some studies attempting immediately to replicate Moscovici and Personnaz's study were met with results that to this day remain semi-incorrigible (Doms & Van Avermaet, 1980; Sorrentino, King, & Leo, 1980). Not all were convinced by the proffered interpretations; the controversy continues (Gardikiotis, 2011; Martin & Hewstone, 2012; Nail, Di Domenico, & MacDonald, 2013).

3 The Millstone of the Social Influence Paradigm

The perception-based studies of Asch, Moscovici, and others were constrained owing to the very nature of the social influence model, which is distinguishable from the more versatile attitude change or persuasion model (Crano & Prislin, 2006). The latter allows for, indeed depends upon, the elaboration of complex communication (written, verbal, etc.), whereas social influence approaches almost invariably deal with the effects of others' extremely constrained behaviors or verbalizations, and do not involve the elaboration of persuasive communications (Crano, 2001a, 2001b; Crano & Alvaro, 1998b, 2014; Crano & Seyranian, 2007, 2009). In the classic early studies of Moscovici and colleagues, for example, the "persuasive communication" of the confederates was "*vert*." Although this communication might have elicited considerable agitated cognitive activity, it is not likely to have stimulated in the naïve subjects much cognitive work in the service of message elaboration, which is integral to Petty and colleagues' understanding of the elaboration and subsequent attitude change process (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; Petty & Wegener, 1998, 1999). The lack of focus on the cognitive elaboration of the minority's communication was an almost inevitable outcome of research performed in the social influence research tradition. This is not a criticism of the work, per se, which reached the boundaries of the social influence model employed in the research, but rather a warning of the limits of the paradigm itself.

[1] It is interesting that Moscovici, who was celebrated more for his theoretical than methodological insights, was a talented and creative experimentalist, as this study amply demonstrated.

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4 Theoretical Implications of Indirect Influence and In-Group/Out-Group Minority Status

In a critically important investigation, Pérez and Mugny (1987) helped move the study of minority influence from the social influence paradigm to the realm of persuasion (see Alvaro & Crano, 2017, for an extended discussion of this work). This study showed that minorities could affect attitudes of the majority that were related, but not identical to the focus of their persuasive communications. In this case, Pérez and Mugny (1987) showed that under appropriate circumstances, a) an in-group minority could move the attitudes of a majority in a favorable direction toward contraception, b) even though the arguments of the minority were focused on the issue of abortion, and c) despite the fact that the minority never even mentioned contraception in its persuasive appeal.

An intelligent layperson might retort that contraception and abortion both have to do with forestalling conception or childbirth, and so, the conceptual relation between the two terms is patently obvious. An informed social psychologist probably would agree, but at the same time, might be stumped when asked to relate this finding to extant theory of the time, or to explain the psychological process or processes by which a source that failed persuade an individual or group to accept the central thesis of its persuasive communication could move those same entities on an issue that was related to the gist of the persuasive communication, but not directly mentioned in that message, and clearly involved different processes if not different outcomes (interrupting the process of conception *versus* precluding childbirth).

One could argue, in the absence of any evidence whatsoever, that the majority was attempting to mollify the minority group so as to maintain "peace in the family." But in Moscovici's writings, we often find the terms minority and out-group used synonymously. In retrospect, this was a mistake. Conversion theory begs the question: "Why would the majority deign to offer comfort to, or ingratiate itself with an out-group?" As Tajfel and Turner (2004) have argued, and many others in the social identity camp have shown, out-groups often are denigrated, stigmatized, cheated and ostracized (Tajfel, 1979); more to the point, they are singularly ineffective sources of social influence (David & Turner, 1996, 2001a, 2001b) except under special circumstances not typically encountered in the world outside the social influence laboratory (Diehl, 1988, 1989; Dobbs & Crano, 2001; Mummendey *et al.*, 1992). In the development of conversion theory, neglect of the social identity of the minority vis-à-vis the majority group was an important oversight. Subsequent research was to show the critical nature of this consideration in the development and refinement of subsequent theories of minority influence, which include the conflict-oriented models of Mugny and his collaborators (Butera, Falomir-Pichastor, Mugny, & Quiamzade, 2017; Butera & Mugny, 2001; Mugny & Pérez, 1991), persuasion-based models of Martin and Hewstone (2008), consensus based models of Erb and Bohner (2001) and Mackie (1987), and Prislin and colleagues' dynamic change theory (Prislin, Brewer, & Wilson, 2002; Prislin & Christensen, 2005), among others.

The generativity of Moscovici's original insight is as noteworthy as is his contribution to the substantive literature of social influence and persuasion research. Even so, it is

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difficult to understand how the in-group or out-group nature of the minority was not taken into consideration in the development of the conversion model. I believe not accounting for the membership of the contending (majority and minority) groups was the major shortcoming of Moscovici's original theory of minority influence – but one that is easily remedied, as will be shown in our forthcoming discussion of the leniency contract theory of minority influence.

5 Subjective and Intellective Tasks

How was the research of Pérez and Mugny (1987) to be integrated into conversion theory? The answer to this question is not immediately obvious. In Moscovici's view, the minority induced the majority to accept its appeals by a process largely driven by curiosity. A minority group stimulated the majority to wonder why the minority held the position it professed. This curiosity motivated a search for reasons. Sometimes, the reason was immediately evident: the minority had proffered an undeniable rationale for its position, which was based on solid evidence, and so the majority was literally forced to accept the minority position. This rare event usually occurs in contexts involving consensually acknowledged "facts." For example, the answer to the question, "What is the capital of France?" does not admit to argument. The answer is objectively correct by virtue of its widespread consensual acceptance. It involves an *intellective judgment* in Laughlin and Ellis's (1986) terms – but most of the decisions we require in our social experiments are not intellective; rather, they involve subjective judgments, and in these circumstances, the majority or minority status of the influence source assumes critical import (Crano, 2017; Laughlin, 1988).

In contexts involving subjective judgments – that is, matters of preference, opinion, or palate – questions regarding the minority's position may indeed arouse curiosity, as Moscovici proposed, and here is why the failure to consider the in-group or out-group status of the minority source is so important. Why would members of the majority care what the minority thought, unless the minority were in-group, or, following Laughlin (1988), considering an intellective issue? Yet, considerable research in persuasion involves subjective issues, beliefs and attitudes, rather than hard facts, and years of persuasion research has shown that outsiders, outcasts, or others who are members of out-groups are not strong sources of persuasion in subjective judgment contexts (Crano, 2012; Goethals & Klein, 2000; Gorenflo & Crano, 1989; Suls, 2000; Suls, Martin, & Wheeler, 2003; Vala, Drozda-Senkowska, Oberlé, Lopes, & Silva, 2011).

Even when dealing with in-group minorities, the curiosity hypothesis that is central to conversion theory's explanation of minority influence bears close consideration. The argument is that the majority, motivated by curiosity, analyzes the minority's communication and ultimately comes to accept its position though the process by which, over time, the message source is dissociated from its message, thus alleviating the implied danger of identifying with an unpopular source. There are two issues that argue against this position. First, why would the majority be curious about the (perceived) unjustified grievances of a minority, even an in-group minority? Motivation beyond mere curiosity must surely be added to the persuasion equation. This motivation is

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conflict, which is an important factor in some theories of minority influence (Martin & Hewstone, 2008; Mugny, 1985; Mugny & Pérez, 1988, 1991), but did not seem to be emphasized strongly in the original theory.

The second issue is that if the minority was in-group, then why would members of the majority be reluctant to be identified with it? The focus on disinclination to be identified with an out-group source makes sense, and social identity theory and research mitigates the likelihood of this occurring in the first place. However, social identity theory also assumes that other in-group members help form one's own conception of self. In this case, the beleaguered majority group member is assumed under most circumstances to identify of at least sympathize with an in-group minority influence source. From the standpoint of well-established, evidence-based conclusions from social identity theory, conversion theory seems to have tied itself into a knot.

Another issue deserving consideration has to do with the question: How does conversion theory explain the delay in minority influence that is regularly observed in the literature (Wood, Lundgren, Ouellette, Busceme, & Blackstone, 1994)? One might claim the answer is obvious. It takes time to consider the arguments of the minority and to dissociate its message from its undesirable source, and this process accounts for delayed focal changes sometimes seen in minority influence research. This is a plausible position, but it does not explain when delayed change does not occur at all, or when immediate minority-induced effects are observed, unless we appeal to Laughlin's (1988) intellective/subjective distinction. The problem, of course, is that Laughlin's distinction is not a part of Moscovici's theory. A second issue is that the minority sometimes has little to no influence (e.g., Mackie, 1987; Mackie & Hunter, 1999), and the conversion model also does not fully specify the conditions under which either success failure is predicted to occur.

The failure of the minority to influence the majority was tackled by Robin Martin and Miles Hewstone and their colleagues (Martin & Hewstone, 2001, 2008; Martin, Gardikiotis, & Hewstone, 2008; Martin, Hewstone, & Martin, 2007, 2008). Their approach is indebted to the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) of Petty and Cacioppo (1986). They predicted and found that minorities tended to instigate message elaboration, whereas the message of the majority often was accepted without much contemplation. This important finding helps untangle much of the non-intersecting results in the literature, and bears close attention from future researchers and theorizers. However, it also must be admitted that message elaboration and its various outcomes were not a part of the original conversion model. This is the second major fault of the theory, and probably grows from the social influence paradigm that was employed in its initial development, a paradigm that puts little emphasis on emphasis of complex communications.

A final consideration has to do with the indirect change effects that sometimes are encountered in the minority group influence literature. This equivocal statement reflects the fact that indirect effects often are not even measured, and when measured, often do not arise. Indirect influence on attitudes is not persuasively treated in the conversion model, again owing largely to the social influence paradigm that guided the original research. In this paradigm, indirect influence refers to findings that indicate

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the minority had succeeded in wielding influence, but majority group members were either incapable or unwilling to express it, as discussed in Moscovici and Personnaz (1980). In the attitude change or persuasion paradigm, indirect influence is related to this conception, but the conceptual overlap is far from complete. In persuasion, indirect influence is conceived as attitude change in the direction prompted by the minority, which are related, but not identical to the thrust of the minority's appeal. In Pérez and Mugny's (1987) important work, the minority appeal was focused on abortion, and movement in the direction of greater openness to contraception was found in the experimental context in which the in-group minority was the source of the persuasive message. Gordijn, De Vries, and De Dreu (2002) found that arguments in favor of an increase in required study load positively influenced students' attitudes toward increased university grants. In Alvaro and Crano's (1996, 1997) work, the minority argued for allowing gays in the military, and the indirect attitude object, determined by discriminant function analysis, was the topic of gun control. Attitudes toward gun control became more conservative after exposure to the conservative-leaning gays in the military communication. Both of these issues were highly contentious. When focal and indirect objects were reversed, findings compatible with the original results emerged. In Crano and Chen's (1998) study, the topic involved students' mandatory (and unpaid) work for 10 hours each week on University-related tasks. This proposal was not well received by students; however, they proved more willing to pay higher fees upon immediate measurement, and two weeks later. Those who showed strong indirect attitude effects were significantly more influenced by the focal mandatory work proposal. The authors interpreted this change in focal attitude after large-scale change in a related attitude as indicative of a structural relationship that characterized the participants' cognitive structures. For extended discussions of this position, see Alvaro and Crano (2017), Crano (2017), and Crano and Lyrintzis (2015).

6 The Context/Comparison-Leniency Contract Model

A theoretical position that has taken Moscovici's original work on social influence as its point of departure, and has attempted to add to its predictive power, is called the context/comparison model (CCM). The extension of the CCM to the minority context is termed the leniency contract model, which has evolved over the past quarter-century (e.g., see Crano, 1994, 2010; Crano, 2017; Crano & Alvaro, 1998a). A formal model of the leniency contract that was published in Papastamou, Gardikiotis, and Prodromitis (Crano, 2017) is presented in Figure 1. As this theory has been discussed elsewhere, the following provides only a sketch of its major properties as they apply to the changes I have proposed to bring Moscovici's conversion theory into greater congruence with contemporary social-cognitive theory and research results. The present discussion focuses on the ways in which the leniency contract model takes present knowledge to enlarge upon some of the crucial insights of Moscovici's innovative theory.

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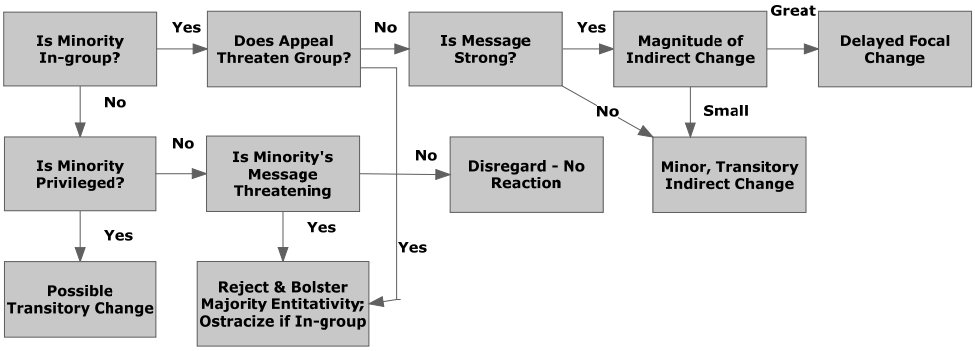


Figure 1: A schematic diagram of the Leniency Contract Model. A flow chart summarizing the cognitive responses of a majority group member to an appeal from a minority group. The predictions of the leniency contract model are presented in the ultimate endpoints of the model. The figure appeared originally In Papastamou, Gardiokis, & Prodromitis (Crano, 2017).

As discussed at the very beginning of the chapter, the acts of probing, extending prior work, postulating, examining, assessing and linking current findings to prior ones are some of the fundamental processes by which science progresses. Adopting this approach does not constitute a criticism of the work of our forebears, but rather celebrates it.

7 Minority Group Status

The crucial limiting element of conversion theory is its disregard of the in-group or out-group nature of the minority. There can be no doubt that lacking information about the group status of a minority influence source will affect the majority's openness to elaborating its appeal. Maass, Clark, and Haberkorn (1982) showed that minority status mattered. Single minorities were significantly disadvantaged in the persuasion game, but their disadvantage was substantially less than that which "double minorities" must overcome. Maass and her colleagues (1982) correctly interpreted their result as consistent with earlier work by Moscovici and associates (1969). A central reason for the ineffectiveness of double minorities is that they invariably signal the minority's out-group status As Maass and colleagues (1982) observed, "Double minorities … differ from the majority not only in terms of their beliefs, but also in terms of ascribed category membership…or social categorization" (p. 90). In addition, they also found that majority group subjects perceived the double minority as acting out of self-interest: "The attribution of self-interest was particularly pronounced for double minorities…[who] were perceived as having a stronger self-interest than either single minorities or the majority" (p. 98). Circumventing conversion theory's inattention to the group membership issue, the leniency contract model explicitly postulates that the first (cognitive) response to a minority's appeal involves the question of the group status of the prospective influence source. If the minority is out-group and does not seriously question the legitimacy of the majority, it generally will be ignored. However, if it questions the majority's legitimacy, or worse, its right to exist,

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the majority will exert sanctions on the minority to the extent possible, sometimes extending even to genocide or "ethnic cleansing" (Crano, 2012).

8 Task

Not much research has been undertaken within the minority group influence tradition on the type of judgment task posed by the minority's appeal. However, If we appeal to the general group decision making (e.g., Laughlin, 1988) literature, and research growing from Festinger's (1954) social comparison model (see Suls, 2000; Suls, Martin, & Wheeler, 2003; Suls & Wheeler, 2012), then the intellective *versus* subjective distinction may prove informative. In both research traditions, the in-group or outgroup status of an influence source may not prove material if the source proposes a solution that is patently obvious once it is revealed or discovered – the classic "Eureka" or "aha!" phenomenon (Auble, Franks, & Soraci, 1979).In this case, which involves intellective (or objective) tasks, which admit to a definitively correct observation, the minority is not particularly disadvantaged. This assumes that the minority's objective observations are not viewed as self-servingly subjective by the majority, a transformation of fact to opinion, or vice versa, which appears an increasingly common practice today.

Although often claimed, absolute certainty in contexts involving obviously subjective beliefs, attitudes, and values is by definition never unequivocally verifiable. In these circumstances, the majority has a built-in advantage, as might be inferred from Mackie's (1987) research. Subjective beliefs are a matter of choice; if the belief cannot be confirmed or rejected, there is no particular reason for the majority to succumb to the blandishments or demands of the minority, unless the issue is of no importance whatsoever, or the majority members have no knowledge of the issue, and thus, may be swayed by almost any nonthreatening information. In this case, the minority would seem to have a reasonable chance to prevail. The leniency model does not take a strong position on the intellective *versus* subjective issue, owing to a lack of research specifically directed to this issue. However, based on this logic, if pressed, it would seem that it would be more difficult to move the majority on subjective issues – issues of preference – than on issues of fact.

9 Indirect Minority Influence and Message Strength

The leniency contract model's account of indirect influence differs from that of other models insofar as it explicitly presumes a structural relation among attitudes, consistent with considerable research in cognition and social cognition (e.g., Anderson 1983; Crano & Lyrintzis, 2015; Crano & Prislin, 2006; Dinauer & Fink, 2005; Judd, Drake, Downing, & Krosnick, 1991; McGuire & McGuire, 1991). In contexts involving ingroup minority influence, the leniency contract model postulates the minority will be given an open hearing with little source deprecation or internal counterargumentation on the part of the majority. The majority is secure in their largess because of the implicit agreement that is the central axiom of the model, namely that the price to be paid by the minority for their chance to plead their case without fear of reprisal or recrimination is the implied agreement with the majority that the minority will not

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prevail. This price is the quid pro quo, the necessary feature of all contracts (hence, the title of the model, the *leniency contract*). This contract is not explicit, and need not be even consciously acknowledged by either group. Axiomatically, it describes the ways contending groups of different strength interact.

This contract appears to shield the majority from ever changing, but leniency can work to its ultimate disadvantage. If the minority's message is strong and persuasive, the majority's contractually mandated rejection of the minority position is not the end of the story. The change pressure introduced into the attitude systems of majority group members by the open consideration of the minority's message, with little counterargumentation and source derogation, diffuses to related attitudes in the individual's cognitive structure (as inferred by results of Alvaro & Crano, 1996, 1997). These attitudes, being undefended, are considerably easier to change. After all, why mount defenses or counterarguments against appeals that never mention other cognitively related, and thus, vulnerable attitudes? In this circumstance, the leniency process puts pressure on the majority attitudes that are most contiguous in the cognitive space of the attitude that is the focus of the minority's communication. If the communication is strong enough, these related attitudes will be under pressure to change, and the usual resistance processes of counterargumentation and source derogation will not have been activated.

10 Delayed Minority Influence

The structural orientation admits to a plausible explanation of delayed minority group influence effects that is parsimonious if somewhat more complicated than that of conversion theory. The standard theory argues that time is needed for the majority to think about the reasons for the minority's contrary position, dissociate the source from its message, and ultimately adopt the minority's position as its own. Theoretical counterarguments to this position were detailed earlier in this chapter, and need not be repeated. The leniency contract model's explanation is considerably different, but it is logically coherent, consistent with theorizing in social cognition and research, and congruous with the results of a direct test by Crano and Chen (1998). In this study, participants exposed to an in-group minority's persuasive communication showed statistically significant evidence of indirect influence. In a delayed retest two weeks later, analysis disclosed a significant positive relation between subjects' initial magnitude of indirect change and extent of delayed direct (or focal) change. Greater indirect change consistent with the minority's arguments significantly predicted delayed change on the focal issue two weeks later.

If we are willing to assume a) that attitudes do not exist in isolation in the cognitive system, b) that interconnections of varying strength exist among attitudes in this structural system of attitudes, and c) that we can specify near relations among the attitudes within cognitive attitudinal structures through various statistical techniques (e.g., multidimensional scaling analysis, cluster analysis, factor analysis, and the like), then the possibility of indirect attitude change, and subsequent direct change, seems inescapable as well as predictable. Destabilizing the attitude structure cannot be a pleasant cognitive state, and we have known at least since Festinger's (1957) classic

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monograph that we are not likely to tolerate a state of cognitive dissonance for long (see Crano & Messé, 1970). With sufficient change of one or the other of the cognitive elements (attitudes) in a cognitive structure, the structure will adjust to reestablish consistency or balance. In these circumstances, the attitudinal focus of the original minority influence appeal is likely to adjust in the direction of the newly changed indirect object, consistent with the minority's argument that prompted the immediate indirect change response.

11 Summing up

The leniency contract was developed to organize and explain the diverse and sometimes apparently contradictory findings in the field of minority group influence. In the usual case, the question is whether or not a weaker group (in terms of number, status, legitimacy, or power) can influence the perceptions, attitudes or actions of a stronger group. In answering this question, the leniency contract proposes that the first consideration of majority group members is concerned with whether or not the persuasive message emanates from an in-group or out-group source. If out-group, the appeal is dismissed, unless threatening, obviously correct, or privileged (e.g., brain surgeons probably are not in-group for most people, but owing to assumed expertise and one's need, their communications will be considered carefully – see Figure 2).

If the source of the message is deemed in-group, majority group members determine if the minority's communication represents a threat to the continuance or good name of the group. This is critical, as the group is a source of members' identities, and so any threat to the group's continued well being is a threat to self-identity. If the message is viewed as a threat to the group, the in-group messenger will be ostracized, demonized, or worse. If the message is not overly threatening, it will be elaborated. This elaboration is relatively open-minded, and processed without strong disparagement of the in-group minority. After all, the first rule of all groups is to maintain the group. To ostracize or overly disparage an in-group member weakens the group and ultimately threatens its perpetuation. If the in-group minority's message is strong, its elaboration by the majority will have an effect, but not directly. As explained, the leniency contract maintains the integrity of the group by not swinging wildly from one orthodoxy to another in response to a minority's plaint. Rather, it offers a cognitively indulgent response context in which the in-group minority's plea is stated, given the implicit and shared understanding that it will not succumb to it. However, this openness represents a threat to the majority's attitudinal continuity, insofar as it may introduce extreme pressure on related cognitions if the minority's message is strong and persuasive.

This model is sufficiently inclusive to predict all possible effects of minority influence found in the literature, including no change (especially in the face of weak out-group minorities), immediate (if transitory) direct minority influence (in cases of weak in-group minority appeals), strong or weak indirect influence on related attitudes (depending on the strength of the in-group minority's appeal), or indirect change followed by delayed focal attitude change (if the indirect change is sufficient). The model is parsimonious and falsifiable (i.e., amenable to empirical test). It requires control over

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important variables in the research context, but if that is forthcoming, the leniency contract model of minority influence provides a useful framework for understanding.

It also is obvious that the model owes a great debt to the original theorizing of Moscovici. Without his provocative research on minorities, and the challenges he posed to the field to take the minority seriously, it is highly unlikely that this new model would have been developed. The second debt is owed to the work of Mugny and his collaborators, who carried the question of minority influence into the realm of persuasion and attitude change. I hope that this chapter, an enterprise attempting an integration of theory and researchm will be seen for what it is, a continuation and, hopefully, an evidence based development and refinement of an insight into human behavior that originated from one of our time's greatest social scientists. If nothing else, it has been designed respectfully to extend the shelf-life of one of Moscovici's most audacious theoretical contributions.

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