Influence of a Consistent Minority on the Responses of a Majority in a Color Perception Task

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Most of the studies on social influence have dealt with conformity, social pressure exercized by majority groups, and have used dependency as the source of influence. This study concerns innovation, social pressure exercized by a minority, and tries at the same time to prove that behavioral style is a general source of influence. An objectively blue stimulus is used which two subjects (stooges) out of six call "green" in the experimental groups. When the behavior of the minority is consistent, the number of "green" replies in the experimental groups is significantly higher than in the control group. This change in answer is not only a verbal agreement but corresponds to a change in their perception code, as shown by a color discrimination test. When the minority's behavior is not consistent, its impact on the majority is minimal. Therefore it is the consistent behavioral style of minorities that insures the adoption of their point of view.

THE CONFORMITY BIAS

Specialised literature commonly assimilates the process of influence to the process of conformity (Allen, 1965). On the one hand, the tendency is to assume that any type of influence leads to conformity, and moreover that conformity is the sole phenomenon achieved by means of influence. On the other hand, when examining the individual, it is always assumed that he asks himself the question "Should I follow the group or the minority?" or in other words he is faced with the alternative of conformity or deviance. On the contrary, an individual frequently poses the question in exactly the inverse manner: "What should I do so that the majority will adopt my point of view? How can I change the conception of others?" The multiplicity of such possible questions tends to contradict the afore mentioned assimilation. Without going into the details stated elsewhere (Moscovici and Faucheux, 1969) we can consider the innovation as a form of social influence. In order to study theoretically and empirically this form, the analysis of the action of a minority upon the majority, the qualities which it must possess in order to make its

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point of view accepted, constitutes a sort of prolegomenon. This research proposes to show more clearly one of these qualities and to depart from the customary emphasis on attitudes which are linked to conformity.

BEHAVIOR STYLE AS A SOURCE OF INFLUENCE

In almost all of the research done to date on social influence only one of its possible sources has been studied theoretically and experimentally: dependency.

Nonetheless, for certain reasons, we cannot make use of it in the study of innovation. First of all, it seems clear that dependency in relation to an individual or a subgroup which innovates, is a consequence rather than a cause of an action aimed at exerting an influence. The necessity to heed the advice of electronics, computer or television experts follows the adoption of electronic equipment, computers, or television, or any kind of specific technical invention. A minority which truly innovates, which transforms social reality, only rarely has power at the outset. In addition, it is to be noted that the individuals or subgroups who change rules, values, or knowledge, are not judged as being superior to others insofar as competence is concerned.

In short, dependency in relation to the phenomenon which interests us is neither a decisive independent variable, nor a differential factor which can account for influence which is exerted. Thus, we were prompted to seek another source of influence which is not subject to the limitations which we have just mentioned, and which comes closer to expressing the active resolute character of a minority. We believe that we have found it in the behavioral style of the individual or those individuals who propose a solution to a problem, a new norm for a group. Good reasons exist to suppose that in the process of innovation, the way in which the behavior is organized and presented could suffice to provoke the acceptance or the rejection of a judgment or a proposed model during the course of social interaction. Moreover the consistency of the behavior of a minority, the fact that it resolutely maintains a well defined point of view and develops it in a coherent manner, appears as if it ought to be a powerful source of influence, which under the circumstances would not be a result of an explicit dependency.

A series of experiments made by one of the authors in collaboration with (Faucheux and Moscovici, 1967) has already shown the impact of a consistent minority upon a majority when preference judgments concerning equiprobable stimuli or the modification of an implicit norm are involved. In the present study, which is a continuation of the previous one, we should like to prove that this action is also possible when the majority norm to be changed is explicit or quasi-physical.

Why are we expecting such an effect? The presence of a norm can be dis-

tinguished in the spontaneous unanimity of those who share it, and in the expectancy that a high probability response will occur in the face of a stimulus or a determinate object. The validity of judgments and opinions (Kelley, 1967) and the stability of relations with the environment are guaranteed owing to this norm only if these two criteria are expected.

Now, let us suppose that a subgroup diverges from this customary mode of response and that he provides an alternative mode of response to the same object, the same stimulus. The diversity which replaces uniformity in the group is a creator of uncertainty and of conflict; doubt is cast upon the hierarchy of responses of each person or of the group and the variability is increased. By insisting on his answer, a minority will not only engender a conflict, but will intensify the conflict, because it poses its own judgments and opinions as having the same value, as being equivalent to those of the majority (Worell 1967). Moreover, this insistence proves that taking one's stand is not casual and that the subgroup has no intention of conceding or submitting to the group.

This exerts a tremendous pressure towards acceptance of the new and surprising response. We must also add that these conflict relations assume a particular character in the case where the stimulus is physical. The reality to be judged in these circumstances is not individual, arbitrary: it is common, in principle universal. No matter who, faced with such a reality, one is expected to react in the same way, and each one imagines that he is reacting as he is supposed to react.

In an experiment cited by Asch (1962), Sperling demonstrated that the influence exerted on an individual is much greater when he believes in the existence of an objective response, than when he does not believe in it. Thus, the fact that a physical stimulus is involved does not necessarily work against the exertion of influence by a minority; on the contrary it may facilitate it. The majority has one single means to reduce the tension, to ignore the judgment of the minority: that is to transform the conflict of response into a conflict of attribution. This means that it must be able to explain the difference not as being produced by the properties of the stimulus, but as being produced by those who perceive it: an anomaly of vision, a lesser judgment capacity. This is possible when minority is an isolated individual (Moscovici 1969).

In the event that nothing in the situation permits such an attribution and that members of the minority, constituting a dyad, cannot be distinguished from members of the majority by such traits, then the latter are even more obligated either to adopt the response of the minority or to reject it, i.e., to polarize. No other means is left to them to restore the invariability of response in their relation with the external world.

With these presuppositions in mind, in order to demonstrate the influence of a minority upon a majority within a group, we have conceived an experiment in which:

(a) Response conflict is increased by the consistency of the minority and by the consensus among its members.

(b) Objectivity is an implicit exigency of judgments.

(c) The responses of the majority and minority are exclusive, constituting an alternative, without either one just negating the other, as, for example, if one were to say that two unequal amounts of dots were said to be equal.

(d) The difference in judgment cannot be accounted for by individual qualities. (Thus it was necessary for the minority to be composed of more than one person.) Otherwise the conflict in response could be transformed into a conflict of attribution, permitting differences to be explained by personal eccentricities, for example.

(e) The judgment of the majority in the laboratory is identical with that of any random sample outside the laboratory, so that the judgment of the minority can be expected to be directly counter to the normal expectations in society.

EXPERIMENTAL PROCEDURE AND RESULTS

FIRST EXPERIMENT. The subjects were liberal arts, law and social science students. Given the nature of the experimental material female subjects were preferred because of their greater involvement in evaluating the color of an object. The stimuli used consisted of slides with two different types of filters mounted in them: (1) photo filters permitting the passage of a beam of light of the dominant wave length (X=483.5) in the blue scale; (2) neutral filters which reduced light intensity in certain proportion.

In a set of six slides, three slides were more luminous than three others. These variations in light intensity were studied in order to make the task more realistic and less boring. Their effect in this experiment was controlled.

Each experimental group consisted of four naive subjects and two confederates. Once the subjects were seated in a row before the screen on which were to be projected the slides, they were told that this would be an experiment on color perception. At the same time they were informed that they would be asked to judge the color and variation in light intensity of a series of slides (a brief explanation of the meaning of light intensity was furnished). Before passing a judgment, the whole group was asked to take a Polack test collectively, in order to check the participants' "chromatic sense."

This test had a twofold objective: first, to eliminate those subjects who

perchance might have visual abnormalities; second, to emphasize the fact that everyone in the group had normal vision, so that the confederates' response will not be attributed to a difference in vision, i.e., to a personal factor external to the experimental situation.

After the collective correction of the result to the test, and after having ascertained that everyone sees normally, the subjects were instructed what responses might be given and how the experiment would be conducted, to wit replying aloud and naming a simple color as well as estimating the light intensity in numerical terms (ranging from 0 for the dimmest to 5 for the brightest). Subjects were also told that the preliminary trial would be just for practice in which each subject would only make a light intensity judgment.

The real purpose of these preliminary trials was to enable the subjects to get acquainted with the color of the stimulus and to immunize them in McGuire's (1964) sense of word against the future onslaught of the instructed minority which does not share the norm. During these preliminary trials the confederates answered at random. Following these trials, the series of six different slides was presented six times, the order of the slides varying systematically from one series to the next. Thus these were 36 trials, each one lasting 15 seconds, separated by approximately 5 seconds of darkness. In each trial the two confederates exerted influence by calling the color "green." In this manner, the confederates were both internally consistent from one trial to the next with each other, since they gave all the time the same response.

At the end of the experiment the subject filled out a questionnaire concerning the stimuli and the other members of the group. As usual, the real objectives of the experiment were explained before leaving the room.

Two variations were introduced regarding the seating of the two confederates and the presentation of the stimuli.

(1) *Confederate variation:* in 12 groups the confederates were seated side by side and gave the first and second responses, while in the 20 other groups they were separated, and occupied the first and fourth places. The variation in the seating of the second confederate was aimed at modifying the interpretation of his behavior, that is to say, to make him appear more independent of the first confederate.

(2) *The stimulus variation:* in order to test the impact of the commitment to the first response and to permit a possible change, we modified the mode of presentation of stimuli. In 13 groups which included those in which the confederates were seated in position 1 and 4, the continuity of the sequence of the stimuli was interrupted by introducing two one-minute pauses after a sequence of 12 slides.

The order of response of the subjects remained the same from one trial to the next for the duration of the experiment.

SECOND EXPERIMENT. We wondered whether the subjects experienced an influence which, even if it did not result in a change in verbal response during the experiment, did have a lasting effect on their perception. We expected a shift in the blue-green designation threshold which would reveal a reaction that was repressed during the social interaction. Certain subjects did refuse to adopt openly the minority response, feeling compelled to remain loyal to the general norm, even when they themselves began to doubt its validity. Here one might expect a latent attraction manifesting itself by an extension of the designation "green" to stimuli in a zone which a control group would call blue. The opposite reaction (extension of the notion blue to stimuli in the green zone) would be the result of polarization.

The first stage of this experiment is identical to the preceding experiment, that is to say that the minority exerts its influence on the majority. At the end of this phase the experimenter thanked subjects telling them that another researcher who was also interested in vision phenomena, would like to solicit their participation in another research project, independent of the one in which they had just participated. He left the room and the second experimenter entered immediately and repeated his request. The latter having obtained the agreement of the subjects seated them around a table and said to them that it was an experiment related to the effect of the exercise about the vision phenomena. He then described the material, isolated the subjects by means of cardboard screens and instructs them to write down the responses individually on a sheet of paper. The material consisted of 16 disks in the blue-green zone of Farnsworth 100-hue set perception test. Three disks from each end of the "blue" and "green" scale were absolutely unambiguous, but the other 10 stimuli might appear ambiguous. After having made sure that the subjects understood the instructions well, the experimenter announced the beginning of the test. Each disk was presented on a neutral background for a period lasting approximately 5 seconds; it was placed in the center of the table so that it would be visible to everyone. The series of 16 disks was presented 10 times in the continuous method. The order of presentation was randomized. After the discrimination test the first experimenter returned, the subjects filled in the postexperimental questionnaire and the experiment ended in the same manner as the previous one.

Ten groups participated in this experiment.

THIRD EXPERIMENT. In this experiment which was identical to the first one, only we diversified the consistency degree of the confederates. In this case they answered 24 times "green" and 12 times "blue," the dispersion

of "blue" answers being randomized. Eleven groups participated to this experiment.

The control group was the same for the three experiments. For this group the presentation of the stimulus was continuous. The control subjects also took, of course, the discrimination test after the initial experimental phase. In all we had 22 control subjects, or four groups of 6 subjects, with the elimination of two subjects who failed to give the discrimination response according to the instructions.

RESULTS

THE PERCEPTUAL TASK. "Green" responses (responses which express the influence of minority in the experimental groups) constituted 8.42 per cent of the answers of the 128 naive subjects in the two first experiments. There is no significant difference between the two series of groups on the perception tests nor on the postexperimental questionnaire. Among the 22 subjects of the control group, only one gave two green responses, representing 0.25 per cent of the responses of the uninfluenced subjects. That means that the latter perceived the stimulus as really blue and that this norm is firmly established socially.

The difference between control and experimental subjects on the basis of Mann Whitney's U test ($Z=2.10$) turns out to be significant ($p=.019$, one-tailed test). Other data show this influence as well. Subjects changed their response (giving 4 or more green responses) in 43.75 per cent of the groups. The percentage of individuals who yielded was 32 per cent. Thus we have two categories of groups, those in which no subjects were influenced and those in which subjects were influenced. In the latter, it can be seen that 57 per cent of the subjects or two subjects per group on the average gave the same response as the confederates. 18.70 per cent green responses were obtained in these groups.

Thus, the quantity of green responses which we obtained was not so much the result of isolated individuals who followed the confederate, as the result of a modification of judgment within the group. The confederates' seating position, and the type of introduction—continuous, or discontinuous —of the stimuli did not have any differentiation effect.

Moreover, we have noticed that even though no color contrast effect existed, the subjects were more similar to the confederates when light intensities were weak than when they were strong ($Z=3.37$, $p<.003$, Mann-Whitney U test). This agrees with the Bezold-Brücke phenomenon concerning perception of color with different luminosities. Yet, irrespective of the luminosity the proportion of green response was significantly higher in the experimental groups than in the control groups.

In the third experiment, where one or several responses of the confederates were inconsistent, we obtained only 1.25 per cent green responses. A similar proposal was obtained in groups completely inconsistent (50 per cent blue—50 per cent green responses of the confederates). Although we have to explore more systematically the variation of inter- and intra-subject inconsistency, the results we have just mentioned are suggestive of a marked influence of the behavior style of a minority.

THE DISCRIMINATION TEST. The question here concerns whether the subjects who changed their social response under the influence of the consistent minority also changed their perceptive code. In addition, we also wanted to verify the hypothesis that the subjects who did not change their social response, *even in the group where the majority was not at all influenced at this level by the minority,* at least changed their perceptual code.

The measurement of the threshold makes it possible to verify this hypothesis. Our calculations bear on the threshold values, which were obtained by a graphic method on the smoothed out curve of individual responses. We retained three values: (1) the 50 per cent threshold indicating the point in the ordered sequence of stimuli where the subject gives as many "blue" as "green" judgments; (2) the lower threshold value indicates the point where the subject gives 75 per cent green and 25 per cent blue judgments; and (3) the upper threshold value, where the subject gives 25 per cent green and 75 per cent blue judgments. To study the influence of the consistent minority, we subsequently eliminated the results of three subjects in the experimental groups who polarized. Their 50 per cent threshold was lower than that of all the control group thresholds. It was their lower threshold value, which indicates a generalization of the notion of blue in the green zone. Then, by comparing the 50 per cent, 75 per cent, and 25 per cent thresholds of the experimental groups (37 subjects) and the control groups (22 subjects) we obtained (Table 1) the expected shift.

All of the data reflect the effect of interaction between minority and majority in the modification of the perceptual code. This modification affects

TABLE 1

Shift in the Threshold for Perception of the Color Green

Threshold	Control Group		Experimental Group		t	P (one-tailed level)
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
50	47.39	1.21	48.03	1.38	1.78	.038
75	46.16	1.42	46.85	1.54	1.68	.047
25	48.41	1.14	49.19	1.28	2.33	.01

more subjects than the change of verbal responses. This proposition is supported by other data. On the one hand, if within the experimental groups a distinction is apparent between subjects who sometimes adopted the minority response and subjects who never adopted the minority responses, no such difference emerges in the discrimination test for the three thresholds under consideration. On the contrary, it must be observed that shift is even more pronounced for groups where the majority did *not* change than it is for those where it changed, and the Student's t of 1.50 is close to the 1.68 value, while it would be significant at .10.[1]

We had made the assumption that in the groups where there was no change in social response, or where the "green" response had been in some way "repressed" one would observe a greater *number* of "green" judgments in the discrimination test. One can see that this is indeed the case. The difference between the groups where the majority did not change and where the majority did change is significant ($\chi^2=14.94$, $p<.002$). We can conclude that the consistent minority has an even greater influence on the perceptive code of the subjects than on their verbal response to the slides. Of course the experimental technique employed was not without its faults.[2] But the results obtained should be mentioned only for the new research line it gives us.

THE POSTEXPERIMENTAL QUESTIONNAIRES. The postexperimental questionnaires we had devised showed us that: (a) The divergence of opinion or response of the consistent minority constrains the subjects to a cognitive activity bearing upon the stimulus. The perceptive change is not produced by a pure attraction towards the minority. (b) The relative certainty of the majority is probably weakened as a result of the confrontation with the minority, and its problem was to explain not why it followed the minority, but why it *did not follow it*.

(a) *The Cognitive Activity of The Experimental Group*. To begin with we can put forward that occasionally seeing green slides, or seeing green in blue slides is not due to a simple acquiescence to the response of the minority.

[1] Thomas and Bistey (1964) report a study using the same stimulus as our study and they found that subjects who called the stimulus "green" or "mostly green" showed significantly greater generalization toward the longer wave length than those who called it "blue" or "mostly blue." Our results are in the opposite direction.

[2] Using the same test, Brown and Lenneberg (1958) showed that there is a relationship between color-naming and color recognition which is a function of stimulus exposure-time. Thus we should have varied the exposure time. Nevertheless since we dealt with highly codable colors, we should be able to recover them from their name. But in general our study is in agreement with theirs which shows that inconsistency within the group corresponds to inconsistency and hesitation in the individual.

Having raised the question: "To what extent is it possible for these slides to be perceived as green" we ascertained that subjects in the experimental groups did not accept this possibility in a more significant degree than subjects in the control groups. On the other hand, however, subjects in the former groups did prove more inclined to *accept* the green response than subjects in the latter groups ($t=2.64$, $p<.008$). Thus, we can infer that the desire to reach an agreement with the minority led to an inclination to see what the latter were seeing, to make an effort to look for green in the blue stimuli. With this in mind we asked the subjects: how many different nuances of color did you distinguish? Subjects in the experimental groups perceived more than two nuances, while subjects in the control groups saw at most one or two ($Z=2.12$, $p<.0342$). A differentiation can also be made between subjects within the experimental groups. Subjects who yielded to the minority say more nuances than those who did not yield to the minority. ($Z=2.79$, $p<.005$). Moreover, whether they did or did not yield to the minority subjects in groups in which a change in response occurred perceived more shades than those in groups where the majority maintained its position, and always responded blue ($Z=1.78$, $p<.076$). Using an appropriate question, we then asked subjects to specify these shades by naming the colors which composed them. No matter what these shades were or how many were cited, for purposes of this analysis we retained only the highest percentage of green found on the response sheet, using it as an index of the extreme limit of a subject's attempt to find this color. All subjects in the experimental groups distinguished more green than those in the control groups ($Z=2.99$, $p<.003$). Of course, in the experimental groups, subjects who yielded to the minority saw more than 30 per cent ($Z=4.92$, $p<.001$). Everything tends to point to the fact that members of the majority made an effort to take into account the viewpoint of the minority, to verify the objective basis of its judgment. At no time did they remain passive, nor were they content blindly to accept or reject a norm opposed to their own. The effect of this was probably the modification, as we saw, of their own perception or their definition of green and of blue.

(b) *Perception of the Consistent Minority.* Naive subjects, who constituted the majority in the experimental groups were more inclined to see green in the blue slides than the control subjects (and actually did see more green). The psychological problem which they had to solve was the following: why, although having agreed that the minority's answer was not without foundation, did they not yield to it, since a physical stimulus was involved? The only possible explanation for such a contradiction was the

assertion that they were less certain than the minority. Thus while they were interested by what was proposed to them, they considered themselves to be more competent than the minority, since they represented normal perception—therefore they had the right to yield or not to yield. Needless to say, these trends can be accounted for in other ways. In spite of the results of the Polack Test, subjects did not believe that a person who always perceived these slides as green could have a very good color perception. Even if he had good vision, his competency in the area of color must be inferior to that of the majority of people. On the other hand the consistent nature of the minority response in the face of the different judgments emitted by the majority, supplied great self-assurance. Without coming to any definite conclusion, it can nonetheless be seen that the first interpretation applies to the two series of predictions considered together, while the second concerns each series separately.

Now let us examine the results obtained more in detail. In the first two questions subjects were asked to judge each of the persons who participated in the experiment, including themselves, on a 10-point scale (from good to bad), as to their capacity first to discriminate intensities and second to perceive colors. A comparison of the grades which subjects gave to themselves, confederates and other subjects for color perception is very instructive. On the whole, subjects considered that the confederates' color perception was not as good as theirs, both in the groups where the confederates were seated next to each other ($t=9.98$, $p<.001$), and in the groups where they were separated ($t=7.02$, $p<.001$). They also considered that confederates did not perceive colors as well the other members of the group ($t=10.83$, $p<.001$). Nevertheless, it was felt that the second confederate had a better color perception than the first confederate ($Z=2.04$, $p=.04$, Mann-Whitney U test). Thus the members of the majority judged themselves more competent than the minority, and they experienced little anxiety regarding their perceptive capacity.

What about certainty? In their postexperimental questionnaire subjects had to classify "the persons who participated in the experiment, according to whether they were more or less sure of their responses." Subjects judged confederates to be more sure of their responses than they were ($t=5.02$, $p<.07$) and than other members of the group ($t=4.42$, $p<.07$). A difference revealed itself also in the perception of the two confederates. The confederate seated in the first position was judged as being more sure of his response than the second confederate, both in the groups where they were seated next to each other ($t=2.54$, $p<0.7$) and in the groups where they were separated ($t=3.22$, $p<.07$). These evaluations were shared by all

subjects, whether they were among those who responded like the consistent minority, or whether they were in the groups where the majority resisted all influence. Three trends clearly emerge from these results: (a) subjects judged themselves more competent and less certain than confederates; (b) judgments of competence and of certitude of confederates had an inverse relation; (c) the confederate in the second position was perceived differently from the one in the first position and as being closer to other subjects. These trends corroborate observations made in other experiments. Thus, Brehm and Lipsher (1958) proved that perceived trustworthiness would be greater when the communicator took an extreme position on either side of the issue, than when he took a moderate position. More recently, Eisinger and Mills (1968) studied the effect of the discrepancy of the communicator position upon his sincerity and competence. They proved that a communicator on the opposite side will be perceived as more incompetent and more sincere in comparison with a communicator who is opposed but more moderate. These experiments suggest that the response of an individual or an extreme subgroup has more weight. But what interests us here is the fact that obtaining the same results as ours, they offer indirect support in favor of the view that consistency, especially of a minority with a norm opposed to the norm of the majority, is at the same time an index of extremism. Now, this extremism, to the extent that it shows itself uncompromising, engenders an anxiety linked to the disagreement, and places the others in a situation where they must either concede or polarize in order to reduce this disagreement and diminish the anxiety. As nothing permits them to polarize, then in certain groups, subjects yielded.

The trends discovered also enlightened us about the role of the second confederate. In a sense, he does not contribute any supplementary weight to the response of the "innovator," the first confederate. We make the hypothesis that his behavior serves as an example to the other subjects; he demonstrates that someone is capable of choosing the minority response that there is a choice possible between the two alternatives and to a certain extent, justifies them. In short, if the effect of the first confederate is an influence effect, the effect of the second would be what economists call a demonstration effect. In any case the minority's influence cannot be attributed to a possible leadership recognized by the group. Questioned as to which persons in the group they would like to find themselves in a similar situation with, subjects did not choose confederates more frequently than any other member of the group. Likewise, when asked: "Who would you like to see lead the discussion (about the experiment) in the group?" a slight, nonsignificant trend can be observed to choose confederates less than other naive subjects.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The experiment which we have just described shows, at least as far as female subjects are concerned, that by being consistent a minority is capable of influencing a majority at the level of verbal and perceptual responses. But this fact must be examined more closely.

GENERALITY OF THE BEHAVIORAL STYLE AS A SOURCE OF INFLUENCE. We have at the beginning of this article put forward the idea that the consistency of the behavior is a source of influence when a minority is concerned and when an innovation process is involved. And it clearly appears that conformity is an effect of consistency and not of dependence towards the majority of the group. To substantiate this conclusion, we will limit ourselves to Asch's experiments. We know that in these experiments a group-majority can induce a single individual to give answers going counter to perceptual evidence. The conditions required for this effect to occur are the usage of a nonambiguous stimulus, the need to respond publicly, and the presence of a unanimous majority. This majority, according to Asch (1962:497) gives rise to a propensity to adopt the erroneous "conformist" responses of the group. Our interpretation is, of course, different, but first let us look to the data and their meaning. We can consider that unanimity in a group corresponds to inter-individual consistency, to consistency which results from coincidence and identity of response of several subjects to a given stimulus. At the same time, the sequence of "erroneous responses," the identity of responses of each confederate through a series of stimuli, expresses internal, intra-individual consistency. What do we see when we examine Asch's results? We see that a *unanimous* majority from two to sixteen confederates provoked the acceptence of "erroneous" responses for one third (32 per cent) of the responses of the naive subjects. The increase in the number of confederates to more than three has therefore no effect on the frequency of these responses. Thus, there is no direct relation between the magnitude of this social pressure and conformity. Now, only one single confederate in a group made up of seven or eight persons has to break the unanimity by giving correct answers for the number of conformist responses to drop to 10.4 per cent or 5.5 per cent. Thus, a group of three unanimous persons is more influential than a group of eight non-ununanimous persons. This is tantamount to saying that it is the inter-personal consistency of, rather than the strength of social pressure which is more important, and comes closest to accounting for the variation in the rate of influence.

Asch's (1955) and Allen and Levine's (1968) experiments give much weight to this innovation. They thought that if social support was important in order to reduce conformist constraint, the dissenter ought to give the

response which the subjects privately considered to be correct. On the contrary, in the case of unanimity where group consistency was the critical variable, a dissenter's disagreement with the group, whether or not his responses were correct and in agreement with the subject's private judgment, was sufficient to decrease conformity. The results of the two experiments show that it is lack of unanimous consensus which is the decisive factor.

What is the effect of intra-individual consistency over time—of the identical repetition of subjects responses to a series of stimuli? As we know, Asch used two types of trials: "neutral" trials in which the confederates responded in a "correct" manner, and "critical" trials in which the confederates responded in an "erroneous" manner. Diachronistically, a group appeared all the more consistent with itself when there were more "critical" trials than "neutral" ones. Asch (1956) varied the proportion of the neutral trials in relation to the critical trials (1/6, 1/2, 1/1, 4/1) and although the differences were not significant, a decrease in the percentage of conformist responses was observed (50 per cent, 36.8 per cent, 38.6 per cent, 26.2 per cent) as the majority became less coherent in time. Iscoe and Williams (1963) obtained similar results. On the whole, considering the information we have at hand today, we can say that it is the behavioral style of a majority or a minority and not the pure amount of social pressure which is revealed to be at the origin of influence exerted.

Change of Verbal and Perceptual Responses. We have seen that the alteration of the answer, while not negligible at the conscious social level, is more marked at the latent individual level. Our present state of knowledge does not enable us to ascertain whether it is of a perceptive or of a verbal nature (Goldiamond, 1958). However, given that most of the experiments in this field (Tajfel, 1969) with the notable exception of Flament (1958) report influence at the verbal level and not at the level of perception, the results we have obtained are all the more remarkable. They oblige us to distinguish between a change in response and a change in code, between influence at the response level and influence at the code level. In this sense, we have the right to say that the consistent minority, in one experiment, provoked a real modification in the norm of the majority, and not only in its response.

If this phenomenon is rare in the laboratory, it is not in political life. Thus, a political party often adopts the ideas or the vocabulary of another party or social movement. Yet citizens continue to vote for this same party, to respond to this party's slogans. For example, in France the Gaullist government in framing its own education program, adopted part of the rhetoric and the program proposed by students and workers in May 1968. Nevertheless, when a Frenchman votes for the Gaullist party he believes

that he is "responding" to the same political body and in the same manner as he did in the past, although both it and its representatives have changed their opinions on very specific questions. Indeed, it is conceivable that minorities are more capable of changing the majority's code than its social response, while the majority would have more influence on the individual's verbal response than on his intellectual or perceptive code. This is an historical reality. Great innovators have succeeded in imposing their ideas, their discoveries, without necessarily receiving direct recognition for their influence. For example, many psychologists have assimilated notions elaborated by psychoanalysis, all the while refusing to recognize the value of psychoanalysis.

Thus, if we really want to understand the process of social influence, it is not enough to study more carefully the role of minorities and of innovation. We must begin to explore more subtle mechanisms of influence than those which are at work in direct and visible acceptance of norms and judgments proposed.

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