11

Social Influence

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KEY CONCEPTS

autokinetic effect
compliance
consistency
conversion
deindividuation
door-in-the-face technique
evaluation apprehension
foot-in-the-door technique
group polarization
groupthink
informational influence
lowballing technique
majority influence
**   (conformity)**
minority influence
**   (innovation)**
norms
normative influence
obedience to authority
referent informational
**   influence**
self-categorization theory
social comparison
social facilitation
social influence
whistleblowing

CHAPTER OUTLINE

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This chapter considers two main types of social influence, both of which can be understood in terms of fundamental motives. First, we discuss 'incidental' social influence, where people are influenced by the presence or implied presence of others, although there has been no explicit attempt to influence them. We consider the impact of the mere presence of other people on task performance, and the impact of social norms. In the second part of the chapter, we ask why people succumb to social influence, highlighting types of social influence and motives underlying influence on the part of the target of influence. In the third part of the chapter, we turn to 'deliberate' social influence. We introduce theory and research on compliance, the influence of numerical majorities and minorities, group decision-making and obedience. Throughout we will see that social influence is an ambivalent concept. On the one hand, it is the glue of society: it makes things work, and society would be utterly chaotic without it. But on the other hand it can be a dark force, underlying some of the most extreme, even immoral, forms of human social behaviour.

Introduction

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On a typical day most of us will be exposed to a large variety of social influences. You might be on your way to a lecture when you see three of your friends turning left, away from the psychology department, towards the café. Although no one has tried to persuade you, you are influenced to follow them and drink coffee instead of justifying your student loan. Why? As you later sit sipping your cappuccino, the topic turns to the use of animals in experimentation, and you find yourself out of line with your three friends, who all try to convince you that such studies are unnecessary and unethical. You try to counter their objections, doing your best to offer 'strong' persuasive counter-arguments. Then you head back to the university and run into the lecturer whom you failed to meet yesterday as agreed. She tells you to come and see her that afternoon; meekly, you obey.

As we noted when introducing the field of social psychology (see Chapter 1, this volume), one of the pioneers of the field, Gordon Allport, actually defined social psychology as 'the attempt to understand and explain how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of other human beings' (1954a, p. 5). So at one level, the study of *social influence* is as broad and diverse as the study of social psychology itself.

> **social influence** change of attitudes, beliefs, opinions, values and behaviour as a result of being exposed to other individuals' attitudes, beliefs, opinions, values and behaviour

This chapter focuses on both 'incidental' and 'deliberate' influence. We begin by looking at how the presence or implied presence of others can affect behaviour in the form of task performance, although there has been no explicit attempt at influence. We then review the impact of social norms on social behaviour, where it is more the implied presence rather than the actual presence of others that is influential. We show how norms are transmitted, and how they can influence a wide variety of human social behaviour, including our perceptions of physical phenomena and our behaviour towards other people.

Linking the two broad categories of influence, in the second part of the chapter we ask why social influence occurs. We consider group functions that social influence serves, and the key

distinction between normative and informational types of social influence. Finally, we integrate different approaches by highlighting four major motives for social influence: 'effective action', 'building and maintaining relationships', 'managing the self-concept' and 'understanding'.

In the third part of the chapter we turn to deliberate influence, what might be considered the core of social influence. We introduce theory and research on compliance, the influence of numerical majorities and minorities, group decision-making and obedience. There are, obviously, close links between these instances of deliberate social influence and the area of persuasive communication and attitude change, described earlier (see Chapter 7, this volume). We will highlight these links, in particular, when discussing majority and minority influence, where we will draw parallels with the elaboration likelihood model of persuasion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986a; Petty & Wegener, 1999). Social influence is also involved in leadership (see Chapter 13, this volume) and in health promotion (see Chapter 15, this volume). This chapter constitutes the interface between the individualistic analysis of social influence processes and the chapters on group processes.

One important difference between the phenomena of this chapter and those of Chapter 7 is that social influence is more general than attitude change. Social influence involves change not only of attitudes but also of beliefs, opinions, values and behaviour, as a result of being exposed to other individuals' attitudes, beliefs, opinions, values and behaviour.

INCIDENTAL SOCIAL INFLUENCE

What effect does the presence of other people have on task performance?
What are social norms, and how are they formed and transmitted?

Social facilitation and social inhibition

The most obvious example of incidental influence is that the presence of one or more other people, even though they are not *trying* in any way to influence us, has an impact on our behaviour. We have already referred to Triplett's (1898) classic observation that cyclists rode faster when racing together than when racing alone (see Chapter 1, this volume). This is now understood to be the first demonstration of the phenomenon of *social facilitation* (F. Allport, 1924), whereby the presence of others leads to improved performance. However, neither the phenomenon nor its explanation has turned out to be straightforward. Following the initial demonstration, researchers conducted numerous studies using a variety of tasks, yielding mixed results. Some studies showed performance improvement as a result of the presence of others, while other studies showed performance impairment. Three main explanations have been proposed, but it is now widely accepted that no single explanation accounts for all the findings and a multifaceted approach is needed.

> **social facilitation/social inhibition** an improvement in the performance of well-learned/easy tasks and a worsening of performance of poorly learned/difficult tasks due to the presence of members of the same species

Mere presence and drive theory Zajonc (1965) highlighted the importance of the task people performed in the presence of others. He suggested that mere presence of others leads to improved performance on well-learned or easy tasks (social facilitation), but to impaired performance on tasks which are not (yet) well learned and which may therefore be perceived as difficult or complex (social inhibition). The mere presence of others facilitates responses that take precedence in an individual's behavioural repertoire (so-called dominant responses, such as pedalling when on a bicycle, which have a higher likelihood of elicitation than other responses). But mere presence inhibits novel and complicated responses that the individual has never or only infrequently performed before (so-called non-dominant responses). People will, then, perform better when others are present than when they are working alone *if* the facilitation of well-learned responses and the inhibition of novel responses are appropriate for successful task completion. Thus, performing well-learned physical motor skills or simple tasks should result in higher performance in the presence of others than when working alone. In contrast, in complex reasoning or problem-solving tasks, requiring concentration and complex cognitive activity, the presence of others interferes with successful task completion (see Figure 11.1).

Why does the mere presence of others enhance the emission of dominant responses? Zajonc (1980) used Hull-Spence drive theory (see Spence, 1956) to argue that the physical presence of others of the same species leads to an innate increase in arousal, i.e., a readiness to respond to whatever unexpected action the others might undertake. This results in an increased emission of dominant responses at the expense of non-dominant responses. In order to emphasize that the effect was based on simple drive rather than on high-level information processing, Zajonc even demonstrated social facilitation with cockroaches rather than undergraduates! (See Zajonc, Heingartner & Herman, 1969.)

Evaluation apprehension Cottrell (1968, 1972) challenged Zajonc's explanation, by suggesting that increased arousal constitutes a learned response to the presence of others rather than an innate response. According to Cottrell, task performers have learned to associate the presence of other people with performance *evaluation*, which, in turn, is linked to the anticipation of positive or negative outcomes. The presence of others will only elicit arousal and
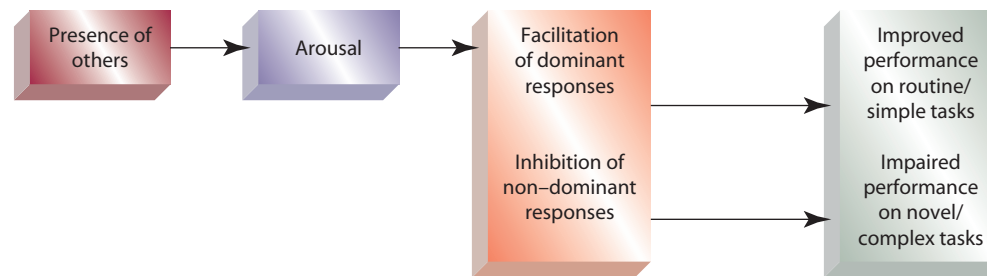
Figure 11.1 *Social facilitation/inhibition on simple versus difficult tasks (according to Zajonc, 1965, 1980).*

the accompanying facilitation of dominant responses (and inhibition of non-dominant responses) *if* task performers anticipate being evaluated by these others.

Of course, we would have difficulty in applying Cottrell's concept of ***evaluation apprehension*** to cockroaches, ants and chickens, which have also shown social facilitation/inhibition (SFI) effects, or to tasks that involve little threat of evaluation, such as putting on or removing items of clothing, on which researchers have also demonstrated social facilitation effects (Markus, 1978). Yet, there is some experimental support for Cottrell's explanation. Research has shown that SFI effects are often eliminated when the salience of evaluation apprehension is decreased, by allowing task performers to give their responses privately rather than publicly, or by having non-evaluative audiences (Henchy & Glass, 1968; Sasfy & Okun, 1974). Further evidence comes from research showing that it is not task difficulty *per se* but the subjective expectation that one will perform well (or poorly) and that one will receive positive (or negative) outcomes that improves (or interferes with) task performance (Sanna, 1992; Sanna & Shotland, 1990). Robinson-Staveley and Cooper (1990) provided a clever demonstration of the role of expectation, in a study where participants performed a computer task alone or in the presence of another person. When participants held positive expectations about success on the task, the accuracy of their performance improved in the presence of another person, but when they held negative expectations, the reverse occurred (see Figure 11.2).

Attention conflict Sanders and his colleagues (Sanders, 1981; Sanders, Baron & Moore, 1978) proposed that the presence of others may produce a response conflict between attending to the task itself, on the one hand, and attending to these other people, on the other hand. Others' presence may be distracting because of noises or gestures, anticipated reactions of approval or disapproval, and people's tendency to make social comparisons (see below). Since some of the attention needed to meet the task demands will be directed at the other people, one may expect a general impairment of task performance on all kinds of tasks, either well learned or not well learned. This distraction interferes with the attention given to the task and creates an internal response conflict that can only be overcome with greater effort. The attention conflict enhances
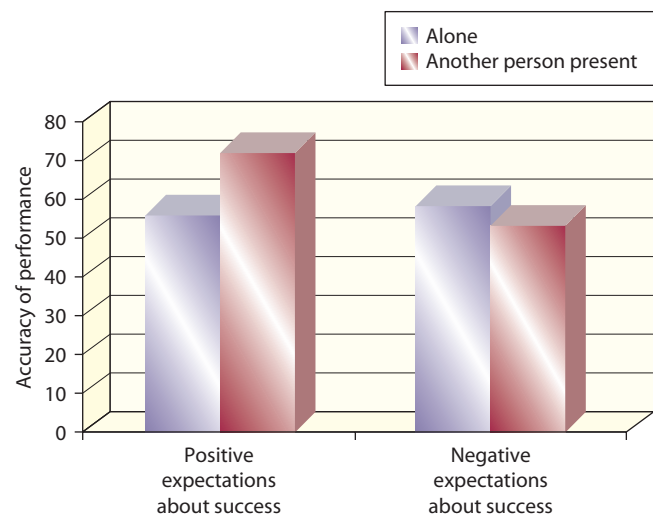
evaluation apprehension concern about being appraised by others causes arousal leading to social facilitation, because people have learned to be apprehensive about being evaluated by others

Figure 11.2 *Social facilitation as a function of task expectations and the presence of others (data from Robinson-Staveley & Cooper, 1990).*

arousal, resulting in the pattern of results noted above – facilitation of dominant responses and inhibition of non-dominant responses.

Integration There is now general acceptance that we need to adopt a multifaceted approach to explain why the presence of others on individual task performance moves from benign to harmful as the perceived complexity of the task increases (Guerin, 1993). The presence of others may interfere with our ability to learn tasks, since learning implies that the most likely (dominant) responses are not yet the correct ones. However, once the required responses have become well learned and routine, the presence of others may improve performance. Given that most tasks in everyday life involve routine as well as non-routine activities, how important are social facilitation effects? A comprehensive meta-analysis by Bond and Titus (1983) concluded that the mere presence of others accounts for only a very small proportion of the variance in individual productivity (for other significant influences on group productivity, see Chapter 12, this volume). Nonetheless, we have seen that the presence of others can be a significant, albeit unintended, influence on task performance. As we will now see, that influence is much more significant when those others

constitute a source of information about which norms should guide our behaviour in social situations.

The impact of social norms

The most fundamental concept in the study of social influence is that of social **norms**. Social norms are rules and standards that are understood by members of a group; they constitute belief systems about how (not) to behave, thus they guide behaviour but without the force of laws, and they reflect group members' shared expectations about typical or desirable activities (Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Levine & Moreland, 1998; Prislin & Wood, 2005). Norms have a number of key functions. First, they help to reduce uncertainty about how to behave appropriately (see van den Bos & Lind, 2002). For example, we know how to behave in some situations (e.g., a mosque) because we have seen how people behave in similar situations (e.g., a church). Second, norms help to coordinate individual behaviour. For example, punctuality reduces coordination losses for other group members – a meeting cannot start until all members are present, so it is important to be punctual so that others do not waste their time. Third, norms help with the distribution of outcomes. If three people are co-writing a chapter, norms help to decide the order in which the names should appear. Norms typically constrain us all, to some degree (e.g., even when you are in a hurry, you have to join the back of the queue to buy a ticket), but we each also benefit from the structure and order they provide (e.g., in the UK, at least, people waiting for some service typically form an orderly queue, and you are likely to be served when it is your turn, without having to protest).

Norms also include an evaluative component. Merely complying with a norm (e.g., waiting in line) will rarely earn you praise (or even comment). But violating a norm often generates negative responses (see Milgram, Liberty, Toledo & Wackenhut's, 1986,

> **norms** belief systems about how (not) to behave, which guide behaviour but without the force of laws, and which reflect group members' shared expectations about typical or desirable activities

Plate 11.1 *Norms constrain everyone to some degree (e.g., even when you are in a hurry, you have to join the back of the queue to buy a ticket).*

research on responses to queue-violators). Indeed, Forsyth (1995) points out that a norm often becomes salient only after it has been violated; and people who fail to comply with situationally relevant norms without an acceptable explanation are generally subjected to negative evaluation, ranging from pressure to change, through hostility, to punishment (see Schachter's, 1951, classic study on the pressure that is exerted on deviates, discussed in more detail in Chapter 12, this volume).

There are two types of norms: *descriptive* norms inform us about how others will act in similar situations (e.g., most English people throw off layers of clothing as soon as the sun comes out in summer), whereas *injunctive* norms specify what behaviour *should* be performed (e.g., when visiting a place of religious worship one should keep quiet and be respectful) (see Cialdini, Kallgren & Reno, 1991). Both kinds of norms emerge out of interaction with others, especially members of the same formal or informal group or social network. The norms may or may not be stated explicitly, and any sanctions for deviating from them come not from the legal system but from social networks. Norms appear in several other chapters of this book (e.g., subjective norms are central to the theory of reasoned action, which links attitudes to behaviour: see Chapter 6, this volume; norms of reciprocity and social responsibility affect helping: see Chapter 9, this volume; and norms are central to understanding group processes: see Chapter 12, this volume). Our social lives are made more complex by the fact that in many social situations multiple norms may apply, and some may even be incompatible; in such circumstances we are more likely to turn to other people as sources of information concerning how we should behave.

Norm formation and transmission   Since some norms may appear to be arbitrary or random (e.g., rituals to which new group members are subjected), researchers have naturally questioned how norms are formed and transmitted. The three main modes of transmission appear to be (1) through deliberate instruction, demonstrations, rituals and so on; (2) more passively, via nonverbal behaviours and implicit activation of normative standards; and (3) by inferring the norm from the behaviour of others around us. As Cialdini and Trost (1998) point out, whatever their origin norms must be communicated to have any effect on behaviour. How is that done? Surprisingly, the social psychological literature on norm transmission is still very small, and one set of studies still towers above all others – Muzafer Sherif's (1935, 1936) classic research on the ***autokinetic effect***. This phenomenon has long been known to astronomers, who find that when fixating on a bright stationary star in a dark skylight, the star appears to move. Indeed, you may already have experienced yourself that, in the absence of reference points, a stationary light appears to move rather erratically in all directions.

> **autokinetic effect** perceptual illusion whereby, in the absence of reference points, a stationary light appears to move

Sherif (1935, 1936) placed participants alone or in groups of two or three in a completely darkened room. He presented participants with a single and small stationary light at a distance of about 5 metres. Sherif asked his participants to give an oral estimate of the extent of movement of the light, obviously without informing them of the autokinetic effect. Half of the participants made their
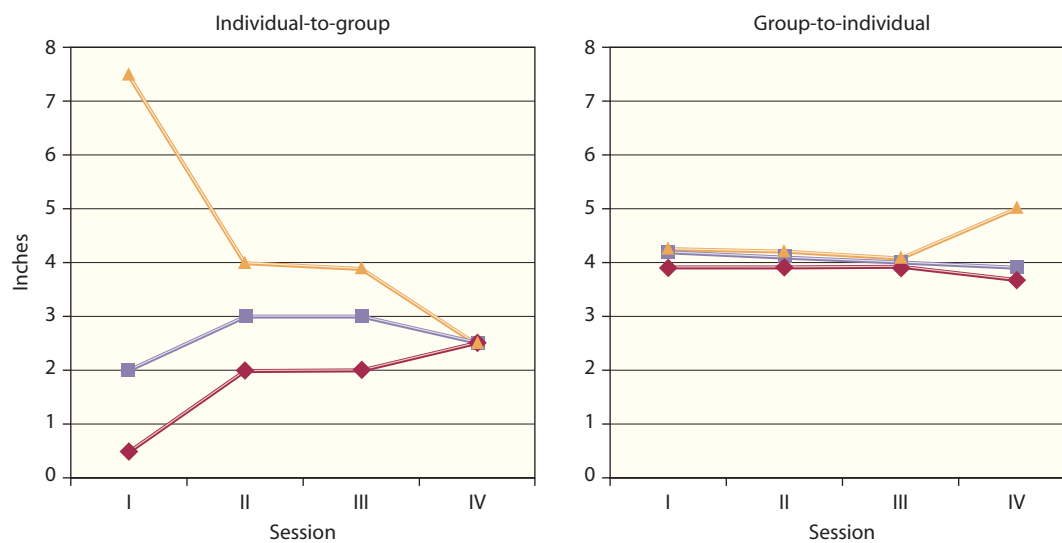
Figure 11.3 *Median judgements of movement under alone (I) or group (II, III, IV) conditions (left), and under group (I, II, III) or alone (IV) conditions (right) in Sherif's (1935) study on norm formation. In each case, judgements by three participants are shown.*

first 100 judgements alone. On three subsequent days they went through three more sets of trials, but this time in groups of two or three. For the other half of the participants the procedure was reversed. They underwent the three group sessions first and ended with a session alone.

Participants who first made their judgements alone developed a standard estimate (a *personal* norm) around which their judgements fluctuated. This personal norm was stable, but it varied highly between individuals (by as much as 7 inches [17.78 cm]). In the group phases of the experiment, which brought together people with different personal norms, participants' judgements converged towards a more or less common position – a *group* norm – within the first group session. Within groups, participants gave essentially the same estimates of movement, even though the range of movement varied by group on average 1 to 5 inches (2.54 to 12.70 cm). With the reverse procedure this group norm developed in the first session and it persisted in the later session alone. Figure 11.3 illustrates both kinds of findings. The funnel effect in the left-hand panel reveals the convergence in the (median) judgements of three participants who first judged alone (I) and later in each other's presence (II, III, IV). The right-hand panel shows the judgements of a group of three participants who went through the procedure in the reverse order. Here the convergence is already present in the first group session and the slight evidence of funnelling out in the alone-last session is much weaker than in the corresponding alone-first condition.

This famous experiment shows that, where confronted with an unstructured and ambiguous stimulus, people nevertheless develop a stable internal frame of reference against which to judge the stimulus. However, as soon as they are confronted with the different judgements of others, they quickly abandon this frame of reference so as to adjust it to that of others. Thus the apparent truth about the environment, whether social or physical, can emerge as people exchange their independent views.

There are two obvious motives for participants' responses – relating to others and understanding. Sherif himself proposed that this norm formation reflected a rational, accuracy-motivated assessment of the situation (Hood & Sherif, 1962). He concluded that, under unstable conditions, where participants were confused about how to respond, they assumed that 'the group must be right' (Sherif, 1936, p. 111). Interestingly, the joint frame of reference formed in the presence of others endured when the source of influence was no longer present, over considerable time, and it transferred to new settings – including when participants joined a new group, and when they were re-tested individually, even up to a year after their initial exposure to others' estimates (Hood & Sherif, 1962; Rohrer, Baron, Hoffman & Swander, 1954).

In subsequent studies Sherif (1935, 1936) placed a single individual who made extreme judgements in each of several groups. This one person influenced the remaining group members, whereby a more extreme norm guided their judgements. Then, once this arbitrary standard was established, Sherif removed the extreme individual from the group, replacing him with a new member. Intriguingly, the remaining group members retained as their norm the higher estimate, and the new group member gradually adapted to the higher standard. Research has even shown that old members can be gradually removed from the group and replaced with new members (naïve participants), and the old norm continues to impact on estimates for a long time until, in fact, the group members have been changed five times (see Jacobs & Campbell, 1961, in Research close-up 11.1). But there is a finite limit to arbitrary norms, and they tend to decay more rapidly across generations the more contrived they are (MacNeil & Sherif, 1976).

What kind of social influence does Sherif's study demonstrate? It is incidental rather than deliberate influence because there were no explicit attempts to influence others. Sherif's work is important precisely because it shows how, at least for an ambiguous
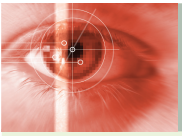
RESEARCH CLOSE-UP 11.1

Norm transmission in a small group

Jacobs, K.C. & Campbell, D.T. (1961). The perpetuation of an arbitrary tradition through several generations of a laboratory micro-culture. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, *62*, 649–658.

Introduction

We select this study for two main reasons. First, because, although published in 1961, it remains a brilliant demonstration, and thus should encourage you not to focus only on the most recently published findings as if they were necessarily 'better' or more interesting, which is not the case. Second, because the full design and write-up are very complex, and you would be unlikely to read the original paper yourself. Indeed, we have simplified the presentation here.

The study builds on Sherif's (1936) use of the autokinetic effect to study the *formation* of norms in order to explore the *transmission* of norms across generations of group members. If you gradually change the group members, will the original norm remain? How long will it take to die out? Jacobs and Campbell studied these questions by using experimental confederates, instructed to give extreme estimates of the amount that the light moved. Once they had inculcated an extreme cultural norm, they were then removed from the group, one by one, across generations, and were replaced by naïve participants.

Method

Participants
One hundred and seventy-five students (no gender given), un-aware of the autokinetic phenomenon, took part in the study.

Design and procedure
The complete experiment consisted of six conditions, but we present only five to simplify, while highlighting the main findings. Participants were seated in a row, 8 feet (2.44 m) from a box designed to emit the small pinpoint of light, in a darkened room. Their task was to estimate the distance the light moved, from the time it appeared until it was turned off. They wore blindfolds when admitted to the room, and whenever old participants left and new ones arrived, so that they would not know which, and how many, group members had changed. In group trials, the 'oldest' member of the group was removed at the end of each block of 30 trials, and a new member was added.

The five conditions include one control condition and four experimental conditions. The conditions varied in terms of the size of the group and, most importantly, the number of confederates (from 0 to 3) who accompanied the participant. This variation was used to manipulate the strength of the norm inculcated and transmitted, these confederates being the vehicles for the transmission of the group's culture. The confederates who were present in the starting condition were removed one at a time, after each round of 30 judgements. The participant always sat to the left of any confederates, who always gave their judgements before he did; they were instructed to give estimates between 15 and 16 inches (38.1 to 40.6 cm).

The five conditions are listed below, each designated by a letter and two numbers. The letters C or X designate *C*ontrol or e*X*perimental conditions, respectively. The first number indicates the size of the group, while the second number indicates the number of confederates present.

1. C-1-0; each participant judged the movement of the light alone for four periods (called 'generations' for the group conditions) of 30 judgements.
2. X-2-1; the initial generation consisted of a solitary naïve participant and one confederate; 9 generations.
3. X-3-2; the initial generation consisted of a solitary naïve participant and two confederates; 10 generations.
4. X-4-3; the initial generation consisted of a solitary naïve participant and three confederates; 11 generations.
5. X-3-1; two naïve participants were paired with one confederate; 9 generations.

Results

The key research question was whether or not the naïve participants, once 'indoctrinated' by the confederates, would themselves pass on the arbitrary norm at all, once the original indoctrinators had left the group.

To answer this question, Jacobs and Campbell examined the judgements of the first generation of respondents to judge without any confederates present. The estimated movement of the light was quite substantial as long as the confederate was not outnumbered (see Figure 11.4). Thus when there were only two members of the group, one of whom was a confederate (condition (2) X-2-1), and when either two-thirds or three-quarters of the original group members were confederates (conditions (3) X-3-2 and (4) X-4-3), estimates were significantly greater than the mean in the control condition (condition (1) C-1-0). However, when the confederate was just one of three group members (condition (5) X-3-1), the average estimate after he had left the group was not significantly different from the control group.

Further analyses pooled conditions 2, 3 and 4 and then compared them with condition 1 to investigate the responses of experimental participants introduced at each of several generations after the final confederate had left the group. Estimates declined, as expected, over generations (see Figure 11.5). But the first four generations all showed significantly greater estimates of the light's movement than in the control condition. By the fifth generation the effect was marginal, and by the sixth
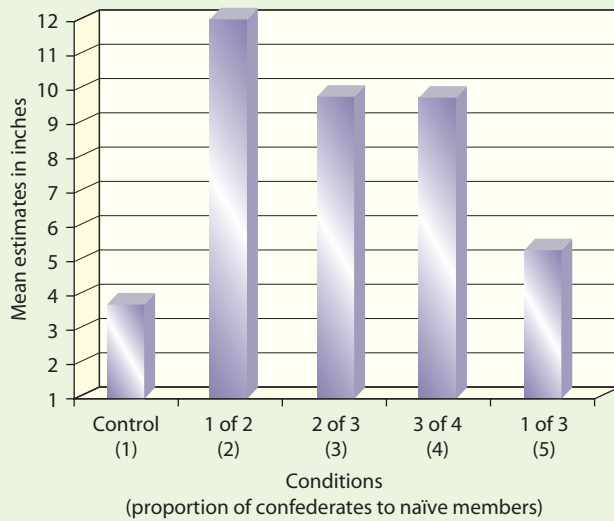
Figure 11.4 *Mean estimates of autokinetic effect as a function of proportion of confederates to naïve group members (data from Jacobs & Campbell, 1961).*

generation the difference from the control condition was no longer evident. Thus the arbitrary social norm was transmitted over four generations.

Discussion

This study was highly successful in its aim of showing cultural transmission of norms that survived total replacement of the original group members responsible for the norm. However, it also placed limits on the perpetuation of an arbitrary norm.
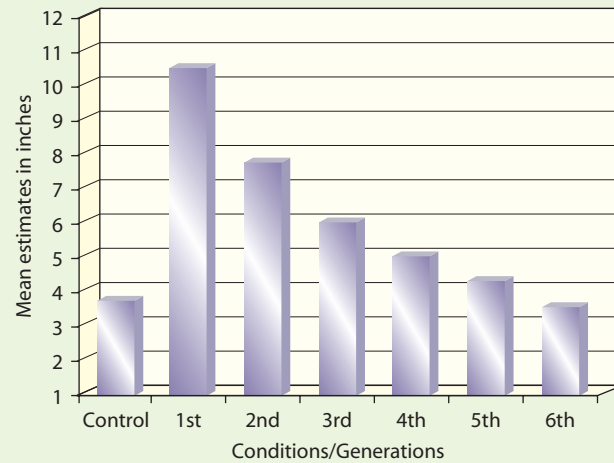

Figure 11.5 *Mean estimates of autokinetic effect as a function of number of 'generations' since last confederate left the group (data from Jacobs & Campbell, 1961).*

Without other sources of support, such norms eventually die out (and in this case quite quickly, after four generations). The study is an ingenious experimental analogue of many real-life situations in which the make-up of group members, or members of the 'culture', changes gradually over time, often every year. At your university, for example, the most senior students graduate and leave each year, but are replaced the following year by a new cohort of the most junior students; yet somehow norms and traditions endure. The same process can be seen in any large institution or organization, or in sports teams.

stimulus, norms can be adopted implicitly, how they develop through reciprocal influence and how they become internalized.

Influence via social norms in more social settings
Sherif's autokinetic studies demonstrated the emergence of arbitrary social norms in response to ambiguous stimuli presented in a stark experimental context. But social norms have the power to influence our behaviour in many more realistic situations outside the laboratory. Often we are guided by norms without even being aware of the fact, as Cialdini and his colleagues demonstrated in a series of clever field experiments to determine the effects of descriptive norms on behaviour (Cialdini, Reno & Kallgren, 1990). Cialdini and colleagues manipulated the descriptive norm for littering behaviour by controlling the amount of litter in a variety of settings (e.g., a parking garage); the setting was either clean (anti-littering norm) or litterered (pro-littering norm). The researchers also helpfully provided a leaflet for the participant to discard (e.g., they placed a reminder to drive carefully under the windscreen wipers of the car parked in the garage). In general, the studies showed that people were more likely to drop litter into a littered environment than into a clean environment. Somehow, the presence of litter on the ground seems to send the message that it is normative to litter in this space, while the clean environment sends

the message that it is normative to take your litter home with you. This tendency was especially strong when the researchers directed the participants' attention to the descriptive norm in the setting. For example, when a confederate dropped litter in an already dirty setting, this focused attention on the littered environment and people were most likely themselves to litter. When the confederate dropped litter into a clean environment, however, this highlighted the lack of litter; people then littered *less* than they did when there was a clean environment with no confederate who littered.

In an even more compelling demonstration of the power of social norms, Crandall (1988) studied the norm-transmission process associated with *bulimia* (a cycle of binge-eating followed by self-induced vomiting or other forms of purging, aimed at keeping one's weight low). He showed that the reward of social popularity was sufficiently powerful to elicit seriously health-threatening behaviour. Crandall capitalized on the fact that bulimia is prevalent in certain groups where it is seen as an accepted means of weight control (the groups include dance troupes, cheerleading squads and – the groups he studied – sororities, female-only student societies found on American campuses). Crandall studied two sororities and found that those who had not initially binged began this practice and, during their first year living in the sorority house, binge eating increased generally among members. In an echo of

(a)

(b)

Plates 11.2a and b *The power of social norms: people are more likely to drop litter into a littered environment than into a clean one.*

Sherif's studies, the amount that these 'sorority sisters' binged also moved towards the average of their friendship network over time. There were, however, also differences between the two sororities studied. In one case, binge eating was positively correlated with popularity – the most popular and well-connected 'sisters' binged more. In the other sorority, the most popular members binged a moderate amount, at the rate established by the group's norms. These studies provide a fairly dramatic example of social influence, via norms, in pursuit of the goal of building and maintaining social relationships.

Perhaps the most dramatic social psychological study of norms is the renowned Stanford Prison Experiment (Haney, Banks & Zimbardo, 1973; see www.prisonexp.org/links.htm). These researchers demonstrated that normal people could be brought to behave in extremely anti-social ways, in part at least by assigning them to specific roles and allowing them to develop norms in line with these roles. These researchers randomly assigned 24 'normal, average, and healthy' (Zimbardo, Maslach & Haney, 2000, p. 199) students to play the roles of mock prisoners or mock guards in a simulated prison established in the basement of the psychology department at Stanford University, California. The study was intended to last two weeks but had to be halted after six days, due to the 'sadistic' (Zimbardo et al., 2000, p. 202) punishment by the 'guards' of the 'prisoners', whose psychological suffering was deemed unacceptably great. This study was recently replicated for a BBC television programme, yielding different results (Reicher & Haslam, 2006) and fierce controversy (Zimbardo, 2006), and appears also to have been quite strongly influenced by demand characteristics (see Chapter 2, this volume).

The extreme forms of behaviour observed by Zimbardo and his colleagues – stripping prisoners naked, depriving them of food, humiliating them and subjecting them to solitary confinement – were partly a result of the *deindividuation* of both guards and prisoners (who each wore role-consistent clothing), depriving them of their sense of individual identity and responsibility. But the

> **deindividuation** a state in which individuals are deprived of their sense of individual identity and are more likely to behave in an extreme manner, often anti-socially and violating norms

power of the contrived situation also encouraged the development of new norms of behaviour, disinhibiting traditionally disapproved ways of treating others, even though there had been no explicit influence from the experimenters to encourage these forms of behaviour. If this all sounds too contrived to be true, or at least to have any consequences beyond the boundaries of this study, consider the treatment by some personnel of the United States Army of their Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison in 2003 (see Hersh, 2004). Norms within that real prison sanctioned terrorizing the prisoners with dogs, making them simulate sex acts with each other, and degrading them in various other ways that violated the Geneva Convention on the treatment of prisoners of war.

Plate 11.3 *Extreme forms of behaviour, such as the mistreatment of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib by US soldiers, result from deindividuation and the development of new behavioural norms that disinhibit traditionally disapproved ways of treating others.*

SUMMARY

We have presented social facilitation and norms as examples of incidental influence. The mere presence of others can improve or worsen performance, depending on task complexity. Norms guide our social behaviour in most settings, helping to reduce uncertainty about how to behave appropriately, but typically have a limited domain of application. Norms can be transmitted in various ways, and often have 'carry-over' effects, across time and settings. Often social influence takes the form of our being influenced by the norm that we infer from other people's behaviour.

WHY DOES SOCIAL INFLUENCE OCCUR?

What functions of group membership are served by group pressures towards uniformity?
What is meant by normative and informational social influence?

Having illustrated some forms of social influence (incidental influence) and before introducing alternative forms (deliberate influence), this is a good place to ask *why* people are influenced by others. As we have indicated, some forms of influence are low-level, rather trivial effects (e.g., social facilitation), which appear to lack motivation. Other forms of influence are much more interesting, because they illustrate some of the fundamental goals that guide human social behaviour and their underlying motives.

One of the earliest theoretical analyses of this question was that of Festinger (1950). Focusing on task-oriented groups with face-to-face communication, he argued that norm formation as well as norm following were outcomes of pressures towards uniformity. Uniformity itself serves two functions of group membership, *social*

reality testing and *group locomotion*. When we follow established social norms, we are confident that our behaviour is appropriate, correct and socially desirable – we have subjective validity (Turner, 1991). Although we can test the subjective validity of some beliefs against physical reality ('Is this water hot? I will put a thermometer in it to check'), other beliefs can only be tested against social reality. Agreement with other members of the relevant group (be it immediate task group or wider reference group), by comparing our views with theirs (Festinger, 1954), provides us with subjective validity for our beliefs (see also Chapters 5, 10 and 12, this volume, on social comparison theory).

Social comparison is most likely to occur in situations that are novel, ambiguous or objectively unclear (Sherif, 1936; Tesser, Campbell & Mickler, 1983), and when people are unsure, they are most likely to look to, and be guided by, the beliefs and behaviours of *similar* others. Thus social reality testing is the consensual validation of beliefs through social comparison. This is seen as necessary for the group to reach its desired goals, what Festinger (1950) called group locomotion. Coordination of goals and activities among group members is necessary for the group to move, as a group, effectively and efficiently in the direction it wants or needs to go. Consider conformity, going along with the group (which we introduced in Chapter 1, this volume, and will return to in more detail below). Even though it tends to have negative connotations in western, individual societies (Markus & Kitayama, 1994), conformity can help us to achieve group goals quickly and easily (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Think for a few seconds how chaotic society would be in the complete absence of conformity.

> **social comparison** the act of comparing one's own attitudes, abilities or emotions with those of others in order to evaluate one's standing on the abilities, or the correctness of the attitudes and emotions

Festinger suggested that opinion discrepancies within groups elicit pressures towards uniformity, which produces communication between members of the group. Uniformity is achieved by group members convincing others to move towards their position, by themselves shifting towards the position held by others, or by redefining the group by rejecting those members who disagree (see Levine, 1989; Turner, 1991).

Deutsch and Gerard (1955) proposed a simple but highly significant analysis of motives for social influence. They argued that people agree with others for *normative* or *informational* reasons. *Normative influence* presumes a need for social approval or harmony with others, and occurs when people conform to the positive expectations of others – they avoid behaving in ways that will lead to social punishment or disapproval. The main goal, then, is to build and maintain satisfactory relationships with others, and accuracy becomes correspondingly less important (Prislin & Wood, 2005). *Informational influence* presumes a need to reduce uncertainty and involves accepting the information obtained from others as evidence about reality. The main goal, in this case, is to make accurate and valid judgements.

> **normative influence** influence based on conforming to the positive expectations of others – people avoid behaving in ways that will lead to social punishment or disapproval

> **informational influence** influence based on accepting the information obtained from others as evidence about reality

Notwithstanding the impact Deutsch and Gerard's framework has had on the whole social influence literature, Prislin and Wood

(2005) have criticized the interpretation of it, which emphasizes only whether people are (public settings) or are not (private settings) under *surveillance*. According to a simplistic application of the normative–informational distinction, social influence based on normative influence is temporary, evidenced in public settings but not maintained in private settings, in which judgements do not have social consequences, whereas informational influence yields enduring change in judgements and holds in both public and private settings. In contrast to this view, Prislin and Wood emphasize that normative motives can have informational consequences that hold up later in time, and in private settings.

One way to integrate these different approaches to understanding *why* social influence occurs is to highlight four major motives (Cialdini & Trost, 1998; see also Prislin & Wood, 2005): 'effective action', 'building and maintaining relationships', 'managing the self-concept' and 'understanding'. This approach emphasizes the goals of the *target* of influence rather than the influencing agent. Thus, for example, a participant in Sherif's autokinetic studies could have shifted his or her estimate of how much the point of light appeared to move, in the direction of the group norm, in order to facilitate the group's working effectively, to gain approval and acceptance from others in the group, to avoid a self-conception as someone who is different or deviant, and to believe that he or she now sees things more accurately.

We will return to these goals throughout the remainder of this chapter. We emphasize, here, that individuals will process the information available in social situations so as to meet whatever goal is salient. Thus, depending on whether the focus is on action, relationships, the self-concept or understanding, the target of social influence will focus information processing on its implications for behavioural effectiveness, social relations, the desired view of the self or the validity of the available information. Each of these goals can also be addressed in various ways (see Lundgren & Prislin, 1998; Prislin & Wood, 2005). When the implications are important, people can address the relevant goal(s) through careful thought and systematic analysis, yielding change that endures across time and settings. Or, when the goals are less compelling and people have less need to be confident in their judgements, they can meet them through less systematic, more heuristic strategies (see Chapter 7, this volume, on dual-route models of attitude change).

SUMMARY

When we look at why social influence occurs, we see some of the fundamental motives that direct human social behaviour. Pressures towards uniformity and agreement among group members help us to validate social beliefs and guide the group towards its goals. We can also agree with others because we wish to be liked (or to avoid being disliked), or because we accept information from others as evidence about how things 'really are'. Ultimately, we are influenced by others so that we behave effectively, build and maintain relationships with others, manage our own self-concept and understand the social world more effectively.

DELIBERATE SOCIAL INFLUENCE

What are the main techniques of compliance, and how and when do they work?
Under what circumstances do numerical majorities and minorities exert influence?
How can different theories be integrated to explain group polarization?
What are the main situational determinants of obedience to authority?

Compliance

Compliance refers to a particular kind of response whereby the target of influence acquiesces to a request from the source of influence (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). The request may be explicit or implicit, but the target recognizes that

> **compliance** a particular kind of response whereby the target of influence acquiesces to a request from the source of influence. The term is also used more generally to refer to change in public behaviour to match a norm, without corresponding change on a private level

he or she is being pressured to respond in a desired way. We emphasize that even though these forms of influence may appear relatively mild – all are based on *requests* – they are also all quite manipulative, and you are likely to encounter them in your interactions with skilled professional salespeople – so beware! But they can also be used for positive ends, as in eliciting donations to charity. (As you will see below, the term *compliance* is also used more generally in the research on conformity to refer to change in public behaviour to match a norm, but without corresponding change on a private level.) We consider below the three main techniques of compliance.

The door-in-the-face technique In the *door-in-the-face technique* (also known as a 'reciprocal concessions' procedure), the requester begins with an extreme request that is almost always refused (e.g., 'Can you lend me £20?'). The requester then retreats to a more moderate request, in fact the one that the requester had in mind all along (e.g., 'Can you lend me £5?'). By acting in this way, the

> **door-in-the-face technique** compliance technique in which the requester begins with an extreme request that is almost always refused, then retreats to a more moderate request, which he or she had in mind all along (also known as a 'reciprocal concessions' procedure)

requester hopes that the concession from an extreme to a moderate request will encourage the target of the request to make a similar, reciprocal, concession and move from initial refusal of the larger request to acceptance of the smaller one (e.g., Cialdini et al., 1975).

As Cialdini and Trost (1998) point out, this technique is widely used in fundraising. For example, after refusing a larger request for a donation, people are much more likely than before to give any contribution (Reingen, 1978). It has also been used to solicit

blood donors (Cialdini & Ascani, 1976). Researchers first asked people to take part in a long-term donor programme. When that request was declined, the requester asked for a one-time donation. Again, compliance with the small request was significantly greater after refusal of the large request (50%) than in a control condition, in which people were asked only to perform the smaller favour (32%). You can even use this technique on your lecturers . . . Harari, Mohr and Hosey (1980) found that if students asked faculty members to spend 15 to 20 minutes talking to them about an issue of interest, some 59 per cent of the faculty agreed. But as many as 78 per cent acquiesced if they had first been asked for a much bigger favour (giving 2 hours a week of help to the student for the rest of the semester), which they had of course refused.

The success of this technique relies on two explanations. First, when the salesperson makes a concession, it is normative for the consumer to *reciprocate*, which he does by accepting the concession. The tactic is much less effective if the time between the two requests is perceived as too long (Cann, Sherman & Elkes, 1975), if the two requests are made by two different people (Snyder & Cunningham, 1975) and if the first request is excessive (Schwarzwald, Raz & Zvibel, 1979). Second, when the target (e.g., the consumer, faced with a salesperson) makes a concession, he has re-established *equity* with the salesperson. The motives underlying compliance of this sort include our desire to build and maintain social relationships, but also our wish to view ourselves as, for example, generous (Brown & Smart, 1991) or consistent (Cialdini, Trost & Newsom, 1995).

The foot-in-the-door technique

The *foot-in-the-door technique* adopts the reverse strategy, with the requester first asking

> **foot-in-the-door technique** compliance technique in which the requester first asks for a small favour that is almost certain to be granted, then follows this up with a request for a larger, related favour

for a small favour that is almost certain to be granted, and then following this up with a request for a larger, related favour (Freedman & Fraser, 1966). For example, a car salesperson may ask a potential buyer to test drive a car. Compliance to the critical request (buying the car) will be enhanced if the customer can first be made to comply with the initial, smaller request. The requester uses initial compliance as a means of committing the target to behave in a way that is consistent with it, and there is plentiful evidence that people are suckers for this approach (see Beaman, Cole, Preston, Klentz & Stenblay, 1983, for a review). It can also be used for charitable donations: respondents who had agreed to accept and wear a small lapel pin promoting a local charity were also more likely to give money to that charity when approached at a later point in time (Pliner, Hart, Kohl & Saari, 1974).

The success of this technique relies on the general idea of consistency (Cialdini et al., 1995; Cialdini & Trost, 1998). Thus the person who agreed to wear the lapel pin will wish to behave consistently when contacted later. This is closely linked to an explanation in terms of self-perception theory (see Chapters 6 and 7, this volume). For example, the car-buying customer may infer from her behaviour that she is the kind of person who drives that sort of car.

Lowballing In the *lowballing technique*, which Cialdini and Trost (1998, p. 178) refer to as one of the 'more unsavoury' techniques, compli-

> **lowballing technique** compliance to an initial attempt is followed by a more costly and less beneficial version of the same request

ance to an initial attempt is followed by a more costly and less beneficial version of the same request (Cialdini, Cacioppo, Bassett & Miller, 1978). For example, a car dealer may induce the customer to decide on a particular model of car by offering a low price for it, or an attractive trade-in deal on the customer's old vehicle. Then, after the decision has been made, the dealer goes back on the deal, giving some reason why the car is no longer available at the originally agreed price. Really unscrupulous dealers may even strengthen the customer's commitment by allowing him to arrange financing, or even take the car home overnight (Joule, 1987).

This technique seems to rely on the target, even though he or she has been duped, feeling an unfulfilled obligation to the requester. The target is also already psychologically committed to the purchase, and so proceeds anyway. The technique is primarily effective when used by a single requester (Burger & Petty, 1981), and when the target freely made the initial commitment (Cialdini et al., 1978; see Chapter 7, this volume, on cognitive dissonance theory).

Integration These techniques of compliance rely on general principles such as equity, reciprocity and self-consistency. One other general principle guiding compliance concerns perceived rewards and costs. People are not quite the suckers that these phenomena may imply, and in general they are likely to comply with a request for help if the costs are low but not if costs are high (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Under low costs they may display relative 'mindlessness' (Langer, Blank & Chanowitz, 1978), for example not listening carefully to the exact words of a requester who asks to jump ahead of them in the queue for the Xerox machine, with the lame excuse that they 'have to make some copies'. However, when the requester asks to copy a larger number of pages (implying costs for the target, who will have to hang around and wait), then the requester's words are listened to carefully and compliance only follows a convincing justification (e.g., 'I have to visit my sick mother in hospital').

The influence of numerical majorities and minorities

Whereas compliance strategies involve interpersonal influence, social influence is also a key phenomenon in small groups. The first studies to examine the conditions under which an individual yields or conforms to a numerical majority were conducted by Solomon Asch (e.g., Asch, 1951, 1956; see Levine, 1999, and Leyens & Corneille, 1999, for commentaries on the impact of Asch's research). The 'Asch experiments' have become a classic in the literature and we have already described the basic paradigm (see Chapter 1, this volume). In this section we will, first, review the main findings from the Asch paradigm, and then consider when and why people conform. Next, we introduce

PIONEER

Solomon E. Asch (1907–1996) was born in Warsaw, Poland. He received his BS from the College of the City of New York in 1928, and his MA and PhD from Columbia University in 1930 and 1932, respectively. He taught at Brooklyn College, the New School for Social Research and Swarthmore College, and held visiting posts at Harvard and MIT. He was Distinguished Professor of Psychology and Director of the Institute for Cognitive Studies at Rutgers University from 1966 to 1972, when he joined the University of Pennsylvania. He is best known for his famous experiments on conformity (or 'group forces in the modification and distortion of judgements'). These studies deliberately opposed physical and social reality and showed that most people succumb to the pressure to conform to majority opinion, even when stimuli are unambiguous. Asch also contributed classic research on impression formation (see Chapter 3, this volume), and he influenced many subsequent social psychologists (Stanley Milgram was greatly influenced by, and worked for, Asch). He wrote a distinctive and authoritative textbook on *Social Psychology*, first published in 1952 and reprinted as recently as 1987.

Source: www.upenn.edu/almanac/v42/n23/asch.html

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minority influence (innovation) situation in which either an individual or a group in a numerical minority can influence the majority

majority influence (conformity) social influence resulting from exposure to the opinions of a majority, or the majority of one's group

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minority influence and *innovation*, the situation in which either an individual or a group in a numerical minority can influence the majority. Finally, we review the major theoretical approaches to explain both *majority influence* and minority influence.

Majority influence: The Asch paradigm and beyond

Asch (1956) began his famous work expecting to show that people were *not* as suggestible as was generally believed at that time. He also believed that the norm-following behaviour shown in Sherif's (1936) studies could be attributed to the ambiguous nature of the autokinetic stimulus. He contended that when unambiguous stimuli were used, and where there was a clearly correct answer, people would remain independent of the group's inaccurate judgements. As you will see, the results turned out rather differently.

Asch used a task in which participants were shown two cards. On one card were three lines of different lengths with each line having a number. The second card contained just one line (the standard line) that was of the same length as one of the three lines on the first card (the task is discussed and illustrated in Chapter 1, see p. 7). The participant's task was simply to state publicly which of the three lines was the same length as the standard line. This task was repeated 18 times, and on each trial different cards were shown using different lengths of lines. In a control condition in which participants performed alone with no group influence, over 99 per cent of the responses were correct, showing that the task was simple and unambiguous.

What Asch did next was very interesting. He had participants perform the task publicly, answering aloud, in groups of six to nine. He arranged that all the participants (all male), except one, would be confederates of the experimenter – i.e., they were instructed by the experimenter to give a set pattern of answers, some of which were clearly incorrect. In some studies the confederates all gave the wrong answer to the task. In addition, the seating arrangement was such that the naïve participant always gave his answers last but one. In other words, the naïve participant heard several people give the wrong answer before he was required to give his own response. Asch's research question was: how would the naïve participant respond when faced with a consistent majority giving an (obviously) incorrect response? In fact, Asch found that the naïve participants gave the same incorrect response as the majority on 36.8 per cent of occasions.

It might be easy to brush aside these findings and assert that participants were just publicly agreeing with the majority. In one variation of the study (Asch, 1956) a situation was arranged so that the naïve participant believed he had arrived too late and so could write down his responses while the other group members (the confederates) still gave their responses aloud. The rate of conforming to the majority fell to 12.5 per cent, but this is still much higher than when no confederates were present (0.7 per cent).

Subsequent studies on conformity tended to move away from Asch's paradigm, which was costly and time-consuming, because each naïve participant had to be tested alongside a group of confederates. Instead, using the Crutchfield (1955) paradigm, there are no confederates and the numerical majority is implied through feedback about other people's responses. Each participant sits in a separate cubicle (with no visual or verbal contact) and they all respond to the task via response switches. In addition, the response of each other group member is displayed on each participant's console. Each participant believes that he is receiving the responses of the group members but, in fact, he is not; and the response pattern can be programmed by the experimenter to show either agreement or disagreement with the participants. More recently still, most studies of conformity have abandoned the group context completely and participants receive feedback concerning other people's responses in summary form (e.g., being told that 82 per cent of the population hold a particular attitude). Comparison between different paradigms shows reliable differences, with conformity rates being highest in face-to-face situations (e.g., Levy, 1960). This is not surprising as literally facing the majority increases normative pressures to conform.

When do people conform?

Asch's first studies were followed by many variants. Among the most important factors found to influence the level of conformity are group size, unanimity and social support, and culture.

In terms of the numerical size of the majority, conformity increased quite dramatically as the number of majority members (faced with a minority of one) increased from one to three, but the influence of additional members was minimal (Asch, 1951; see
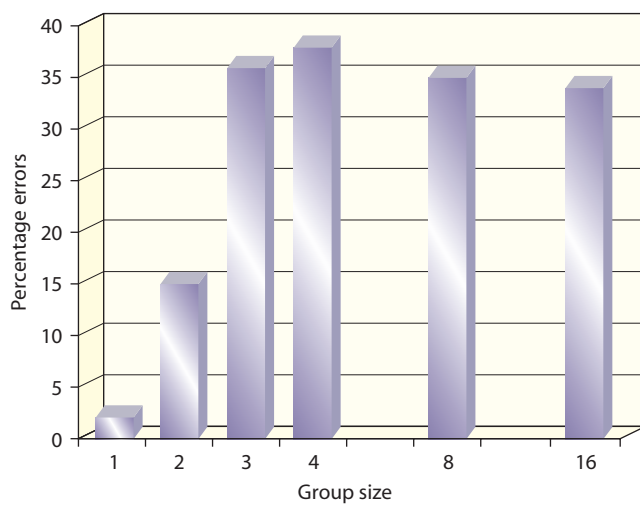
Figure 11.6 *Percentage of errors as a function of majority size (based on Asch, 1951).*

Figure 11.7 *Conformity in the absence and in the presence of types of social support (based on Allen & Levine, 1971).*

Figure 11.6). However, results are rather inconsistent (see Gerard, Wilhelmy & Connolley, 1968; Reis, Earing, Kent & Nezlek, 1976). A crucial factor for the levelling off of conformity after the third participant seems to be that the members of the majority must be seen to be independent, and not simply 'sheep' (Wilder, 1977); once that is the case, there is a linear increase in conformity as group size increases (Gerard et al., 1968).

In one study Asch arranged for one of the confederates, who responded before the naïve participant, to give the correct answer. The level of conformity by the naïve participant dropped dramatically, but was this due to the correct respondent breaking the majority's unanimity, or his giving the naïve participant 'social support' for the correct answer? Another of Asch's studies was designed to answer this question and showed that breaking the majority's unanimity was most important. When he had one of the confederates deviate from the majority, but by giving a different incorrect answer, this broke unanimity but did not give the naïve participant a supporter. The results showed that the rates of conformity by the naïve participant reduced to nearly the same level as when there had been a social supporter. Genuine social support does, however, have a value over and above breaking unanimity when social influence concerns attitudes and opinions rather than unambiguous stimuli (see Allen, 1975, for a review). The true value of the social supporter is in providing a valid and independent assessment of reality (see Allen, 1975). Using the Asch task, Allen and Levine (1971) varied whether the participant had social support, and what type of support. In one of their two support conditions the social support was 'invalid', because the supporter was wearing spectacles with thick lenses. Although giving correct answers, this supporter could not possibly be perceived as a valid source of information on a visual discrimination task. The results, shown in Figure 11.7, indicate that, although invalid support was better than none, valid social support was clearly most effective.

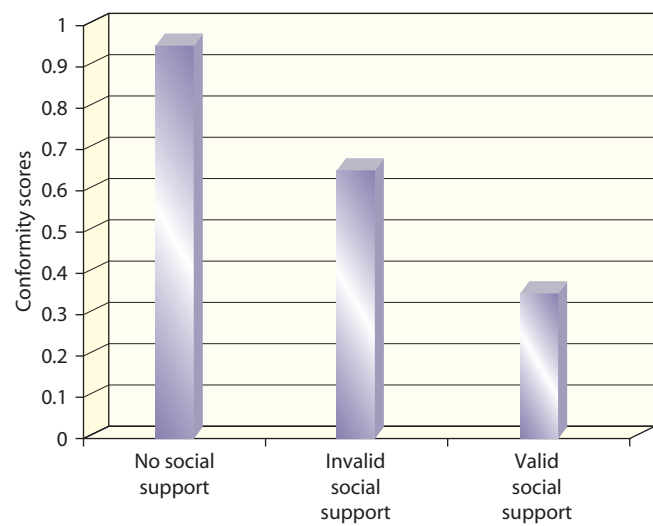Finally, Bond and Smith (1996) conducted a meta-analysis on the Asch conformity paradigm and found greater acceptance of others' judgements in collectivistic cultures (which tend to subordinate individual goals to group goals) than in individualistic cultures (which tend to place an emphasis on individual goals and achievement; see Chapter 5, this volume). Indeed, the impact of culture was much greater than any other moderator of group influence, including the size of the majority.

Why do people conform? In post-experimental interviews conducted by Asch (see Asch, 1952/1987), participants gave a number of reasons why they yielded to the majority. Some thought the majority was wrong but went along with it simply to feel they belonged to the group and to avoid being ostracized. Others thought that the majority must be right as they were the only person to see the task differently, i.e., 'several pairs of eyes' are more likely to be correct than the one pair of the naïve participant.

These different reasons given for yielding to the majority map closely onto theoretical accounts of conformity. The most popular explanation for conformity is based upon the dependency perspective on small group behaviour, which we described earlier in this chapter. Group members are cognitively and socially dependent on each other (Festinger, 1950) because opinion uniformity helps them to validate their opinions (social reality) and to move the group towards its goals (group locomotion).

Explanations for the Asch studies also relied on Deutsch and Gerard's (1955) distinction between normative and informational social influence, introduced earlier. If conformity is related to the desire to be liked (normative influence) and the desire to be right (informational influence), then factors that affect these desires should increase the likelihood of conformity. In terms of normative social influence, conformity should be greater when people believe they are part of a group than when they do not. Making the group salient will increase people's desire to be part of the group and therefore increase conformity. This was shown in the study by Deutsch and Gerard (1955) that used the Asch lines. They found that conformity increased when participants were told they were part of a group, and that the best-performing groups in the study

would win a prize, compared to a condition where no such information was given. On the other hand, conformity decreased when participants' responses were anonymous (via the Crutchfield paradigm discussed earlier). In terms of informational influence, factors that increase the credibility of the majority as a valid source of reality (e.g., status and expertise) lead to more conformity (Kiesler & Kiesler, 1969). Also, factors that weaken the credibility of the majority as a valid source of information (e.g., breaking the majority consensus as shown above) reduce conformity.

More generally, we can understand conformity by considering three main goals that it can serve (Cialdini & Trost, 1998). A shift towards a group consensus can allow the individual: (1) to believe that he or she now sees things more accurately; (2) to gain the approval and acceptance of positively viewed others; and (3) to avoid a self-concept as different, deviant or as refusing to compromise for the good of the group.

Minority influence and innovation Research on conformity focused on the ability of the majority to influence the individual, and therefore neglected the possibility that the individual (or minority) could influence the majority. According to the dependency account, which was the dominant early explanation of conformity, minorities lack the resources to make majority members dependent on them. Minorities, by definition, lack power, status and numerical size and therefore do not have the means to enforce normative or informational influence.

Yet, history is replete with examples of individuals and minorities who, through their actions, have had a tremendous impact upon the majority in society. It was this observation in the late 1960s by the French social psychologist Serge Moscovici that led to a theoretical reshaping of the area. Moscovici argued that if social influence only relied upon conformity to the majority, then it would be difficult to see how groups change, new ideas develop and innovation might occur. Moscovici argued that minorities are distinctive – they stand out from the crowd – and from this distinctiveness they can create conflict within the majority by challenging the dominant majority view, and in so doing offer a new and different perspective. Since people wish to avoid conflict, they will often dismiss the minority position by attributing its deviancy to some underlying, undesirable psychological dimension (Papastamou, 1986). For example, the minority might be seen as 'crazy', 'biased' or 'provocative' in an attempt to explain its deviant view. Indeed, if one considers many 'successful' minorities (such as Galileo, Freud and Copernicus, or, more recently, Bob Geldof), they often suffered ridicule and rejection by the majority before their views became accepted.

In order to overcome people's inclination to reject the deviant minority, the minority must adopt a particular style of behaviour that communicates to the majority that the minority is sure of, and committed to, its position. Moscovici termed this the minority's behavioural style, and he emphasized above all *consistency*, the need for the minority to respond with the same response to the same stimulus, across trials. Moscovici, Lage and Naffrechoux (1969) demonstrated these ideas experimentally. They presented groups

consistency a behavioural style indicating that the same position is maintained across time; seen as central to minority influence

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PIONEER

Serge Moscovici (b. 1925) was born in Romania to Jewish parents. Following systematic discrimination, including exclusion from high school, he was a victim of the 1941 Bucharest pogrom and was interned in a Nazi forced labour camp. He made his way secretly to France, where he studied psychology at the Sorbonne. His professional career has been spent at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, with visiting appointments in Princeton, and at the New School for Social Research, New York. He became director of the Laboratoire Européen de Psychologie Sociale (European Laboratory of Social Psychology) at the Maison des sciences de l'homme, Paris. His ground-breaking contributions to the study of minority influence, which opposed the dominant American focus on majority influence, themselves illustrate the impact that a consistent, outspoken minority can have, without which there would be neither innovation nor social change. He has also written on the history of science and promoted the study of social representations, originating with his classic analysis of how ideas about psychoanalysis infused and influenced French society.
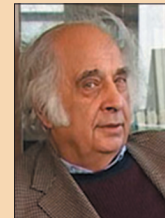
Source: www.answers.com/topic/serge-moscovici

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of six female participants with a series of slides that were unambiguously blue and differed only in their light intensity. In a control condition, participants not exposed to influence named the colour of the slide as 'blue' on 99.75 per cent of trials. However, in one condition the group contained two confederates (a numerical minority) who were instructed to call the blue slides 'green' on every trial. When this occurred the naïve participants also called the slide green on 8.45 per cent of occasions, and this was significantly higher than in the control condition (0.25 per cent) that had no confederates. The importance of the minority responding consistently was shown in a third condition of the experiment, where the confederates were inconsistent (they responded randomly green to only some of the slides, and blue to others). When the minority was inconsistent, the percentage of green responses from the naïve participants fell to 1.25 per cent, which was not different from the control condition (see Figure 11.8). It is clear that for a minority to be successful it must respond consistently (see also Nemeth, Swedlund & Kanki, 1974).

Mugny (1975, 1982) made a further distinction between 'behavioural style' and 'negotiating style'. Because the minority lacks power and the means to exact dependency, the minority has to negotiate its influence with the majority. Mugny (1975) identified two negotiating styles – a rigid style, where the minority refuses to compromise on any issue, and a flexible style, where the minority is prepared to adapt to the majority position and accept certain compromises. Through numerous studies, Mugny
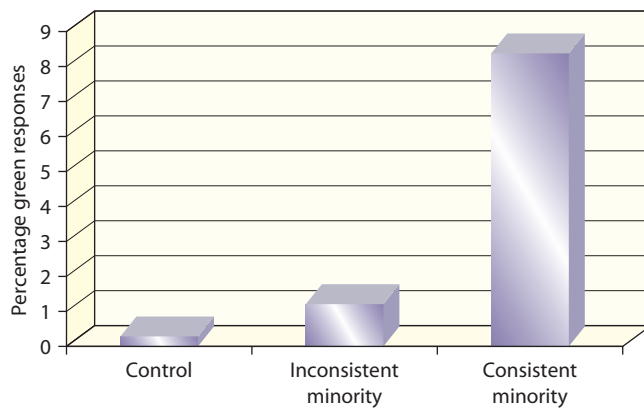
Figure 11.8 *Percentage of green responses given by majority participants in the experiment by Moscovici et al. (1969).*

has shown that a minority that uses a flexible style is more likely to influence the majority than one that uses a rigid style (at least on a public level).

Theoretical approaches to majority and minority influence There are currently two broad explanations for majority–minority influence phenomena, each of which subsumes several theories (Levine & Moreland, 1998). We term these the 'conflict' and 'social categorization' approaches.

Moscovici (1976, 1980) argued that conflict was the critical factor underlying influence. According to him, all forms of influence, whether from a majority or minority, result in conflict and individuals are motivated to reduce that conflict. However, Moscovici argues that people employ different processes, with different outcomes, depending on whether the source of the conflict is a majority or a minority. He proposed a contrast between two types of process, *comparison* and *validation*, which has some similarities to Deutsch and Gerard's (1955) distinction between normative and informational influence. Moscovici argued that majorities induce a comparison process, in which the target of influence focuses on the discrepancy between his or her position and that advocated by the majority. The minority targets, because they wish to gain the majority's acceptance, show compliance (public influence) towards the majority position, but not *conversion* (private influence). In contrast, minorities induce a validation process, in which majority members focus on the content of the minority's position or message.

> **conversion** a change in private response after exposure to influence by others; internalized change; a change in the way one structures an aspect of reality

An important addition to Moscovici's earlier theorizing is the idea that, while minority influence may not lead to public agreement, for fear of being categorized as a minority member (Mugny, 1982), the close examination of the validity of the minority's arguments may bring about attitude conversion on an indirect, latent or private level.

The most provocative claim was made by Moscovici and Personnaz (1980). Using the blue–green slide paradigm, they claimed that if a minority consistently responded that a blue slide

was 'green', then even though they could not bring that participant to accept that direct influence, they would exert influence on an indirect level. In this case the indirect level was the chromatic complementary after-image of the slide. The after-image is what one sees when one views a white screen after viewing a coloured slide: the after-image of blue is yellow-orange, and of green it is red-purple. Of course, the experimenters did not tell participants that different colours were linked to different after-images, and it is assumed that participants were ignorant of this too.

Moscovici and Personnaz did indeed find that when minority-influenced participants reported what colour after-image they saw on a white screen, they tended to see the after-image of a blue slide as more yellow-orange than did majority-influenced participants, consistent with the idea that they had begun to see the slide as the minority saw it, as 'green'. However, this claim is implausible, given what we know about the physiology of after-images. There have also been failures to replicate, and the study has been criticized on methodological grounds (see Martin & Hewstone, 2001a, for a discussion).

A much less contentious way of measuring indirect influence is to measure influence on a target attitude and on an indirectly related attitude. For example, Pérez and Mugny (1987) exposed participants to a counterattitudinal pro-abortion message that was attributed to either a majority or minority source. The researchers then measured participants' attitudes towards both the target issue, abortion, and an indirectly related issue, birth control. Although the issue of birth control had not been mentioned in the source's message, it is related to it at a superordinate level (i.e., someone who is pro-abortion would also tend to be pro-birth control). While the minority had little impact on the direct abortion issue, it had a large impact on the birth control issue – participants had become more favourable to birth control. This was not found when the source was a majority. This result shows that the impact of the minority was low on direct attitudes (presumably because participants did not want to identify publicly with the minority), but the minority had a 'hidden impact' (Maass & Clark, 1984) on a related indirect attitude (see also Alvaro & Crano, 1997).

Moscovici's theory has received partial support from an extensive meta-analysis by Wood and colleagues (1994). Overall, they reported that majorities had greater influence than minorities on both public measures and direct measures responded to in private. Minorities were, however, equally or more influential than majorities on indirect measures responded to in private.

An important recent development in this area has been the increased use of theory and methodology derived from the persuasion literature (see Chapter 7, this volume) to understand majority and minority influence. Specifically, researchers have drawn a parallel between Moscovici's concepts of comparison and validation and the distinction between non-systematic and systematic processing made in models of persuasion (the elaboration likelihood model and the heuristic-systematic model) (see Maass & Clark, 1983; Martin & Hewstone, 2001b). Thus studies have manipulated source status (majority vs. minority) and argument quality (strong vs. weak arguments). This design allows the researcher to investigate which source is associated with systematic processing; if processing is systematic, there should be greater persuasion by the strong than the weak message, as well as more message-congruent

thoughts, and these thoughts should mediate attitude change. There is, however, disagreement amongst researchers concerning which source condition (majority or minority) should elicit the most cognitive scrutiny of the message, with some advocating superior message processing associated with a minority (e.g., Moscovici, 1980), others advocating this for the majority (e.g., Mackie, 1987), and still others proposing that both a majority and minority can lead to message processing under different circumstances (e.g., Baker & Petty, 1994).

Although results are quite mixed (e.g., Baker & Petty, 1994; Martin & Hewstone, 2003; Martin, Hewstone & Martin, 2007), there is now considerable evidence that both majorities and minorities can lead to systematic processing, and hence influence, but this depends on the elaboration level present when targets are exposed to the message (see also Crano & Chen, 1998; De Dreu & De Vries, 1993). For example, Martin et al. (2007) showed that when either motivational or cognitive factors encouraged low

message elaboration, there was heuristic acceptance of the majority position without detailed message processing (i.e., no difference between the impact of strong and weak arguments). When the level of message elaboration was intermediate, there was message processing only for the minority source (for the minority source, strong arguments had more impact than weak arguments). And when message elaboration was high, there was message processing for both source conditions.

However, although both majority and minority sources can, in principle and in practice, instigate systematic message processing, there is growing evidence that minorities lead to 'stronger' attitudes than do majorities (as defined by Krosnick, Boninger, Chuang, Berent & Carnot, 1993; see Chapter 6, this volume). Specifically, minority-instigated attitudes are more resistant to counterpersuasion (Martin, Hewstone & Martin, 2003; see Research close-up 11.2), and are more predictive of behaviour, than are majority-instigated attitudes (Martin, Martin, Smith & Hewstone, 2007).
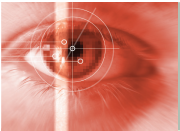
RESEARCH CLOSE-UP 11.2

Resisting persuasion: The value of minority influence

Martin, R., Hewstone, M. & Martin, P.Y. (2003). Resistance to persuasive messages as a function of majority and minority source status. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *39*, 585–593.

Introduction

As the main text of the chapter explains, Moscovici's (1980) conversion theory predicts that minority influence leads to greater message processing than does majority influence. This paper reports three studies that take a different, and novel, approach to examining this hypothesis. We describe one study here. In this study the participants were exposed to two messages that argued different positions in relation to the same topic. The messages were delayed in time, and participants completed attitude measures after each message. The first message (initial message) argued a counterattitudinal position while the second argued the opposite pro-attitudinal position (countermessage).

If attitudes following the initial message had been formed from processing the message in detail, then these attitudes should resist the second countermessage. Active processing of the arguments in the initial message (i.e., thinking of issues in agreement with the message) should provide individuals with arguments to resist the attack from the second countermessage. If, however, the attitudes formed following the first message were *not* based upon detailed message processing, then these attitudes should be influenced by (or yield to) the second message.

The authors predicted that if minority influence leads to greater message processing, as proposed by Moscovici (1980), then attitudes formed following exposure to a minority should

be more resistant to a second countermessage than are attitudes formed following majority influence.

Method

Participants and design
The participants were 69 students (25 males and 44 females) who were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (majority vs. minority support of initial message).

Stimulus materials
The topic of the message was the legalization of voluntary euthanasia (i.e., the right to end life if suffering from a terminal illness). Pre-testing had shown that the participants were moderately in favour of voluntary euthanasia. Two messages were employed which used strong and persuasive arguments that were either against (initial message) or in favour of (countermessage) voluntary euthanasia.

Procedure
Participants were tested in groups of between two and five. The study had five stages. First, participants rated their attitude towards voluntary euthanasia on a 9-point scale from 1, *Totally disagree* to 9, *Totally agree* (pre-test). Second, they were informed that a recent survey at their university showed that either 82 per cent (majority) or 18 per cent (minority) of students were against legalizing voluntary euthanasia. They then read several arguments that summarized the majority or minority position against voluntary euthanasia (initial message) (note: the researchers presented the same arguments in each condition, only the majority/minority label changed). Third, participants' attitudes towards voluntary euthanasia were measured

again on the same 9-point scale employed in the first booklet (post-test I: initial message). Fourth, participants were then shown arguments that conveyed the opposite perspective to the initial message, i.e., in favour of voluntary euthanasia (countermessage). Fifth, participants rated their attitude towards voluntary euthanasia for a third time on the 9-point scale (post-test II: countermessage).

Results

Scores on the one-item scale were reverse coded so that high scores indicated greater influence to the initial message while low scores indicated greater influence to the countermessage. As can be seen from Figure 11.9, the participants were influenced by both the majority and minority, as there was a significant change in attitudes between pre-test and post-test I:
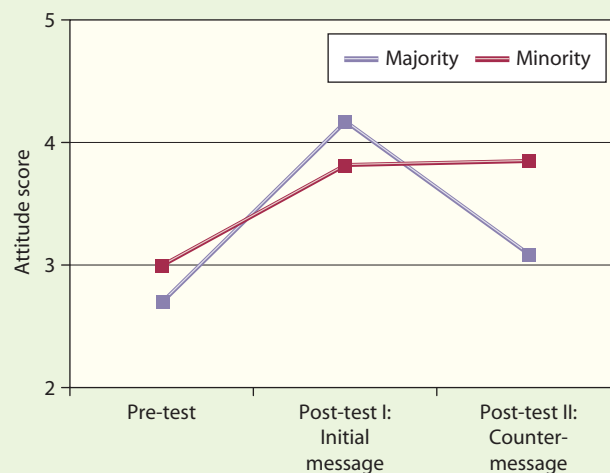

Figure 11.9 *Mean attitudes as a function of majority vs. minority source and pre-test, post-test I (initial message) and post-test II (countermessage) (data from Martin et al., 2003). Note: greater agreement with the source is reflected by high scores on the initial message and low scores on the countermessage. The difference between initial message and countermessage reflects the degree of resistance – the smaller the difference, the greater the resistance.*

initial message in the direction of the source of influence. The amount of change in the majority and minority conditions was the same. At this stage, it appears that the majority and minority led to the same amount of influence, but the results for the countermessage show this was derived from different processes.

The prediction was that attitudes following majority influence would result from compliance, without thinking about the message arguments in detail, and, therefore, these attitudes should yield to a countermessage. This is what happened as the scores following the countermessage (post-test II) were significantly lower than scores following the initial message (post-test I). In fact, attitudes following the countermessage reduced to nearly the same level as the pre-test attitude; this suggests that the attitude change to the initial message was only superficial, as attitudes returned to their pre-test level when exposed to the countermessage.

By contrast, the prediction was that attitudes following minority influence would be due to detailed evaluation of the minority's arguments, and this should enable participants to resist the countermessage. Again, this is what happened. There was no difference in attitude scores between the initial message (post-test I) and the countermessage (post-test II), showing participants had not changed their attitude (i.e., had resisted) when exposed to the second message.

Discussion

This is the first investigation of resistance to persuasion in the context of majority and minority influence and it offers a new demonstration, consistent with conversion theory, of greater message processing induced by a minority, compared with a majority, source. However, the authors acknowledge that majorities can, and often do, encourage systematic message processing, although in situations that encourage message elaboration. This was shown in another study where participants were told, before they read the majority message, that they would later be asked to recall the arguments contained in it (this procedure should encourage message processing). With these instructions, attitudes following majority influence also resisted the countermessage (Martin, Hewstone & Martin, 2007).

There is stronger support for the conflict explanation of majority–minority influence from Nemeth's (1986, 1995) research (see De Vries, De Dreu, Gordijn & Schuurman, 1996, for a theoretical integration of Moscovici's and Nemeth's approaches). According to Nemeth, majority vs. minority status does not affect the *amount* of thinking about the message but the *type* of thinking and the focus of thoughts. She has consistently found that majorities produce a narrow focus on the message they present, whereas minorities produce a broader focus on new information and attitudinal positions. Her explanation for this effect is that learning that the majority has a different position to oneself creates stress, particularly if the majority is physically present, and stress is known to narrow the focus of attention. Specifically, exposure to majority dissent leads to message-relevant, convergent thinking, which

yields uncreative solutions to problems. In contrast, exposure to minority dissent leads to issue-relevant, divergent thinking, producing creative problem-solving solutions (e.g., Maass & Volpato, 1994; Mucchi-Faina, Maass & Volpato, 1991; Nemeth & Kwan, 1985). Consistent with this view, exposure to majority dissent is more helpful than exposure to minority dissent when a task requires convergent thinking, while minority dissent is more effective on tasks requiring divergent thinking (Nemeth, Mosier & Chiles, 1992). The value of dissent within groups will also be seen later, in the section on group decision-making. There we see that an overemphasis on harmony and consensus, and a failure to encourage and attend to diverse viewpoints, can lead to disastrous decision-making.

Whereas the dependence and conflict approaches focus on intragroup processes, the social categorization account focuses on

intergroup *and* intragroup processes (Mugny, 1982; Mugny & Pérez, 1991; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher & Wetherell, 1987). Mugny and Pérez argue that minority influence occurs if identification with the source is compatible with a positive social identity (essentially, the extent to which one feels positive about membership of a group; see Chapter 14, this volume). According to this view, minorities categorized as outgroups have little direct influence, but can have indirect influence if they induce a validation process. Minorities categorized as ingroups can produce direct influence because the target of influence identifies with the source of influence.

The impact of group identification on social influence also lies at the heart of the ***self-categorization theory*** analysis of majority and minority influence (see Turner, 1991). According to self-categorization theory (for a fuller account see Chapters 5 and 14, this volume), individuals identify with a particular group and conform to a prototypical group position. This form of social influence is termed ***referent informational influence***. The prototypical position maximizes both similarities between ingroup members and differences between ingroup and outgroup (Hogg, Turner & Davidson, 1990; Mackie, 1986). Self-categorization theory predicts that social influence will occur only if three conditions are met: (1) the target perceives that the source disagrees with his or her position; (2) the source and target are perceived as members of the same group; and (3) the source's position is prototypical of the group norm (i.e., it is most typical of the ingroup, and least typical of the outgroup; van Knippenberg, Lossie & Wilke, 1994). People have a need to hold attitudes consistent with their social identities, and according to self-categorization theory people adopt ingroup positions to reduce subjective uncertainty about their responses. Disagreement with others categorized as similar to the self, however, conveys subjective uncertainty and motivates people to resolve the discrepancy by means of mutual social influence.

David and Turner (1996, 1999) provided some evidence for self-categorization theory. They found majority compliance and minority conversion only when the source of influence was categorized as similar to the target of influence; when the source was characterized as being dissimilar to the target of influence, there was no direct or indirect influence. However, research on majority–minority influence conducted within the self-categorization theory framework has failed to show that self-categorization (or perceived similarity between target and source) is the mediating process (for an exception see Gordijn, Postmes & de Vries, 2001).

Research by Crano and colleagues has also demonstrated the beneficial effects of being an ingroup minority (e.g., Alvaro & Crano, 1997; Crano & Alvaro, 1998; Crano & Chen, 1998). One interesting idea proposed by Crano is that ingroup minorities can exert influence because, as members of the same group, their counterattitudinal positions are listened to and evaluated in a lenient, open-minded way, promoting changes on indirect measures (the minority is still considered too dissimilar to produce acceptance on direct measures). However, it would be a mistake to argue that only ingroup minorities exert influence (for a review of the impact of outgroup minorities, see Pérez & Mugny, 1998). Furthermore, social change has often come from extreme individuals who are unlikely to be seen as ingroup members. This is true historically, when considering social movements, and in more modern times, when one looks at minorities as sources of new fashions or musical trends.

The upshot of these theoretical analyses is that there is clear support for Moscovici's (1980) addition of minority influence to this area. However, there is mixed support for his theory, as there is for self-categorization theory's prediction that only ingroup minorities will have an impact. There is evidence that majorities and minorities can instigate detailed processing of their messages, under specific circumstances, and that both ingroup and outgroup minorities can exert influence; typically, however, the influence of ingroup minorities will be greater, and it will be shown primarily on indirect private measures of influence and on measures of divergent thinking.

Group polarization

Imagine that you get together with a group of friends and discuss your favourite lectures. If you reach a group decision on, say, your evaluation of the social psychology course, is it likely to be the average of your individual views? In fact, although this was originally thought to be how groups made decisions, research has shown that, far from an 'averaging' process, group discussion is associated with a 'polarizing' process. ***Group polarization*** refers to the tendency to make decisions that are more extreme than the average of group members' initial positions, in the direction already favoured by the group. Individual members' private opinions then converge on this polarized decision. Although many of the relevant studies demonstrate *attitude* polarization, we emphasize that, consistent with our description of the field of social influence in general, the same phenomenon has been demonstrated for many kinds of judgements and decision, including stereotypes, interpersonal impressions and jury decisions (see Lamm & Myers, 1978, and Everyday Social Psychology 11.1, p. 235).

The phenomenon of group polarization was clearly demonstrated by Moscovici and Zavalloni (1969). They had small groups of French high school students first write down in private their attitudes towards two topics, one on which they were initially somewhat positive (their attitude to the then president, Charles de Gaulle) and one on which they were initially somewhat negative (their attitude towards North Americans). Then they had to reach consensus, as a group, on each item. Finally, they made another private attitude rating. As a result of the discussion, participants became more extreme in the same direction as their initial

self-categorization theory theory explaining how the process of categorizing oneself as a group member forms social identity and brings about various forms of both group (e.g., group polarization, majority–minority influence) and intergroup (e.g., intergroup discrimination) behaviours

referent informational influence individuals identify with a particular group and conform to a prototypical group position

group polarization tendency to make decisions that are more extreme than the average of group members' initial positions, in the direction already favoured by the group

EVERYDAY SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY 11.1

Juries

Although we have focused on experimental studies of social influence in this chapter, there is no shortage of examples of these phenomena in the real world, nor of applications of the relevant theory and research. One prime example is the work of juries, a group of 12 laypeople who, primarily in countries with English common-law traditions, decide on culpability in criminal trials or liability in civil trials. These groups make important, sometimes literally life-and-death, decisions. But they are often quite homogeneous – famously described by British judge Lord Devlin as 'middle-aged, middle-minded and middle class' – and illustrate several of the phenomena discussed in this chapter.

Social psychologists have studied juries for many years, typically using an experimental trial-simulation methodology (because, for legal reasons, researchers are not permitted direct access to jurors' deliberations). While this may appear to be a fundamental weakness of the relevant research, because the laboratory analogue cannot exactly reproduce the pressures and responsibilities of a real jury, Kerr (1995) notes that laboratory and jury groups are similar in that they are both ad hoc collections of people who, initially, do not know each other.

Although some key aspects of how juries operate involve individual decision-making tendencies and biases (involving the *juror* rather than the *jury*; see Hastie, 1993), social psychologists have focused on jury deliberation processes (e.g., Hastie, Penrod & Pennington, 1983; Stasser, Kerr & Bray, 1982). Many of the phenomena considered in this chapter (and the two subsequent chapters on groups) can be seen at work in juries. Here we will highlight some of those relating to social influence, focusing on group polarization, majority influence and minority influence.

Juries clearly show group polarization. A classic legal source noted that verdicts handed down are more extreme than the individual jury members' initial judgements, but always in the same direction as the initial judgements (Kalven & Zeisel, 1966). Moreover, bias found in individual jurors' judgements (e.g., attention paid to pre-trial publicity) tends to be accentuated by deliberating juries (Stasser et al., 1982). Myers and Kaplan (1976) studied this issue experimentally, by forming mock juries that had to determine the guilt of defendants. Via a manipulation of the strength of the evidence, some groups already initially favoured conviction, while other groups initially favoured acquittal. Discussions within each of these kinds of groups led to a polarization of these initial tendencies (see also Hastie et al., 1983).

Juries also illustrate majority influence, because initial, pre-deliberation majorities nearly always prevail in the criminal courts (Kalven & Zeisel, 1966). Moreover, social psychologists studying juries emphasize that jury deliberation involves more than simple persuasion (i.e., informational influence), and, in fact, there is a strong normative component (Kerr, 1995).

Smith and Tindale (in press) demonstrate that once it achieves a two-thirds majority, the majority view tends to determine the outcome of the jury decision process (Davis, 1980; Tindale & Davis, 1983). They note, however, that, overall, jurors who support acquittal tend to be more influential than those who support conviction (Davis, Kerr, Stasser, Meek & Holt, 1977; Kerr & MacCoun, 1985; Tindale, Davis, Vollrath, Nagao & Hinsz, 1990), most likely because the not guilty verdict is in keeping with social norms. Therefore, even if seven members of a 12-person jury favour guilty at the beginning of their deliberation, the final verdict is more likely than not to be defined by the five-person minority favouring not guilty; thus minority influence is at work too.

The 'reasonable doubt' criterion used in law requires that jurors vote for conviction only in the event that they cannot generate any reasonable doubts concerning the defendant's guilt. Therefore, arguing in favour of acquittal is often much easier than is arguing in favour of conviction, because only one reasonable doubt needs to be generated in order to validate the acquittal position. Consistent with this notion, Kerr and MacCoun (1985) found that minority factions favouring acquittal were not influential when the reasonable doubt criterion was replaced by a 'preponderance of the evidence' criterion. Under this latter criterion, neither verdict is inherently easier to validate, and, therefore, majority factions tend to prevail.

Banned, as you are, from ever actually observing a jury, you could at least take a well-justified break from your studies of social influence to watch the classic film *Twelve Angry Men* (directed by Sidney Lumet, 1957). This film illustrates the strong normative component within juries, as the majority attempts to coerce opposed and undecided jurors. But most famously it demonstrates minority influence, as the main protagonist (played by Henry Fonda) succeeds in overturning an 11-to-1 jury favouring a guilty judgement (see www.filmsite.org/twelve.html). Or you could read Grove's (1998) interesting account of what it is like to serve on a jury, *The Juryman's Tale*.

Plate 11.4 *Henry Fonda wins over a previously unanimous majority of other jurors in the film* Twelve Angry Men.
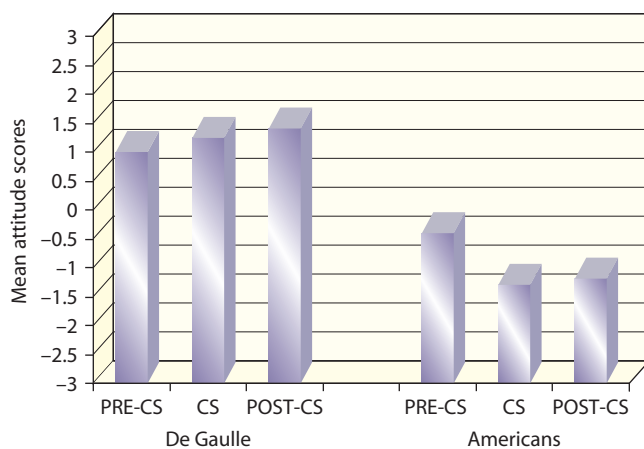
Figure 11.10 *Group polarization: attitudes towards de Gaulle and towards Americans in pre-consensus, consensus and post-consensus conditions (data from Moscovici & Zavalloni, 1969).*

attitudes. As Figure 11.10 shows, attitudes towards de Gaulle became more positive, and attitudes towards Americans became more negative, after the discussion.

There are three main explanations for this effect – persuasive arguments, social comparison and self-categorization – which we will first review, and then try to integrate.

Persuasive arguments As the discussion in a group unfolds, individuals typically learn something from each other; the discussion allows for an exchange of knowledge, opinions and, above all, *arguments*, as group members try to convince one another (Burnstein & Vinokur, 1977). Vinokur and Burnstein (1974) highlighted three kinds of information that circulate among members of a group, information that: (1) expresses a view pro or contra the issue; (2) contains some novelty (which is intrinsically persuasive); and (3) has cogency (the ability to persuade). During the exchange of arguments, each individual is likely to learn novel reasons for holding the consensual view, whereby attitudes become more extreme (indeed, arguments consistent with the dominant tendency are rated more persuasive than those that contradict it; Burnstein, Vinokur & Trope, 1973). Discussion also provides an opportunity for individuals both to repeat their own views and to hear those views repeated by others; repetition contributes to the shift towards more extreme judgements (Brauer & Judd, 1996; Brauer, Judd & Gliner, 1995).

Three lines of evidence support the persuasive arguments approach, also called the informational approach because it argues that polarization is based on informational social influence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). First, polarization is correlated with the ratio of pro vs. con arguments available to group members; second, polarization can be produced by manipulating this ratio; and third, polarization increases with the novelty and validity of the arguments that group members hear (Kaplan & Miller, 1977). Thus, this explanation is essentially parallel to that offered by cognitive theories of persuasion (see Chapter 7, this volume): a group member's attitude is a function of the number and persuasiveness of pro and con arguments recalled from memory when he or she formulates this position (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993).

Social comparison An alternative account of group polarization is based on social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954). It is also known as the normative explanation for polarization, because it contends that polarization is due to normative influence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). According to this view, group members tend to compare themselves with others, and have a need to view themselves positively and gain approval from others (Goethals & Zanna, 1979; Myers & Lamm, 1976). Moreover, they wish to be different from other group members, but in a socially desirable direction; so, after learning others' positions, they shift to an even more extreme position themselves (Myers, 1978).

The main line of support for this explanation is that group polarization can be brought about, quite simply, by learning of other group members' attitudinal *positions*. Participants who received information about the distribution of other group members' positions before they made their own decisions took more extreme positions than those unaware of other group members' positions (Myers, Bach & Schreiber, 1974). They did so, moreover, without ever hearing others' arguments (Burnstein & Vinokur, 1973), and only when they were informed about the distribution of opinions held by all other members of the group, not simply when they were informed of the group average (Myers & Kaplan, 1976).

Self-categorization A more recent normative account of group polarization acknowledges the importance of both persuasive arguments *and* members' positions, but emphasizes that group membership is essential to group polarization (Turner, 1991). Polarization arises from tendencies to accentuate similarities within members of one's own group, but to differentiate from members of outgroups. Consistent with this view, polarization is enhanced by reference to an outside group (Doise, 1969), which emphasizes the ingroup–outgroup division. Indeed, even in the absence of actual discussion between members of the same group, group members' attitudes shift towards a perceived ingroup norm that best defines the group in contrast to the relevant outgroup (Hogg et al., 1990).

Whereas the earlier accounts define the group norm as the *average* position of all the group's members, and view polarization as movement beyond that norm, the self-categorization account argues that the group norm can be more extreme than the average position, and polarization can reflect movement *towards* that norm. According to self-categorization theory (which we introduced earlier, in the section on theoretical approaches to majority and minority influence), individuals identify with a particular group and conform to a prototypical group position, one that defines views held in their group. Prototypes are individual representations of group norms and are formed by making comparisons, both within the group and between the group, which maximize the perceived difference between the two groups (see earlier section on minority influence). Thus, group members perceive the group's position to be more extreme than it actually is, based on the average of the group members' responses. This referent informational influence helps to define the ingroup as different from the outgroup (Hogg et al., 1990; Mackie, 1986).

There are four main lines of empirical support for the self-categorization account of group polarization. First, polarization produced by listening to a group discussion or learning others'

positions depends on participants believing that they are members of the *same* group (i.e., ingroup members), and not a competing group (i.e., outgroup members) (Mackie & Cooper, 1984; Turner et al., 1987; Turner, Wetherell & Hogg, 1989). Second, listeners perceive the *content* of the discussion to be more polarized when they think the discussants are ingroup members than when they do not (Mackie, 1986). Third, polarization is mediated by group members' perceptions of the ingroup's position (Turner et al., 1989). Fourth, intergroup attitudinal polarization is more extreme (ingroup and outgroup positions are further apart) when group membership is more salient, or members identify more strongly with their group (e.g., Mackie, 1986; Mackie & Cooper, 1984; Turner et al., 1989).

Integration It has long been acknowledged that informational and normative approaches appear to work together to produce group polarization (Kaplan & Miller, 1987). Isenberg's (1986) meta-analysis, which predates the self-categorization account, reported significant effect sizes for effects produced by both the normative account and, especially, persuasive arguments theory. Which kind of influence is more important depends on the context. Kaplan (1987) concluded that normative influence was more likely with judgemental issues, a group goal of harmony, person-oriented group members and public responses, whereas informational influence was more likely with intellectual issues, a group goal of making a correct decision, task-oriented group members and private responses. The self-categorization account can integrate the other two approaches because it contends that *arguments* from other ingroup members will be more persuasive than those of outgroup members, and that learning the *positions* of ingroup members will be more persuasive than learning about the positions of outgroup members.

Groupthink

Part of the explanation for research activity on group polarization is the potentially serious implications of polarization for decision-making in natural settings (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Such decisions

Plate 11.5 *Group polarization can have potentially serious implications for decision-making in natural settings such as cabinet meetings.*

are typically made by groups composed of like-minded participants (e.g., councils, committees, juries, the cabinets of ruling governments), and the processes involved may lead the groups to make decisions that are incorrect, unwise or, in the worst case, disastrous. This is most evident in the case of *groupthink*, a syndrome of poor group decision-making in which members of a cohesive ingroup strive for unanimity at the expense of a realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action (Janis, 1982; see Figure 11.11 and Chapter 2, this volume). Groupthink does not necessarily arise from group polarization, but it is an extreme form of problems associated with the failure to exchange information (or, at least, different views) among group members (Levine & Moreland, 1998). In essence, groupthink constitutes an extreme form of normative influence, where the norm to reach and maintain consensus and harmony within the group completely eliminates any informational influence that could show how disastrous the group's intended decision is likely to be.

> **groupthink** a syndrome of poor group decision-making in which members of a cohesive ingroup strive for unanimity at the expense of a realistic appraisal of alternative courses of action
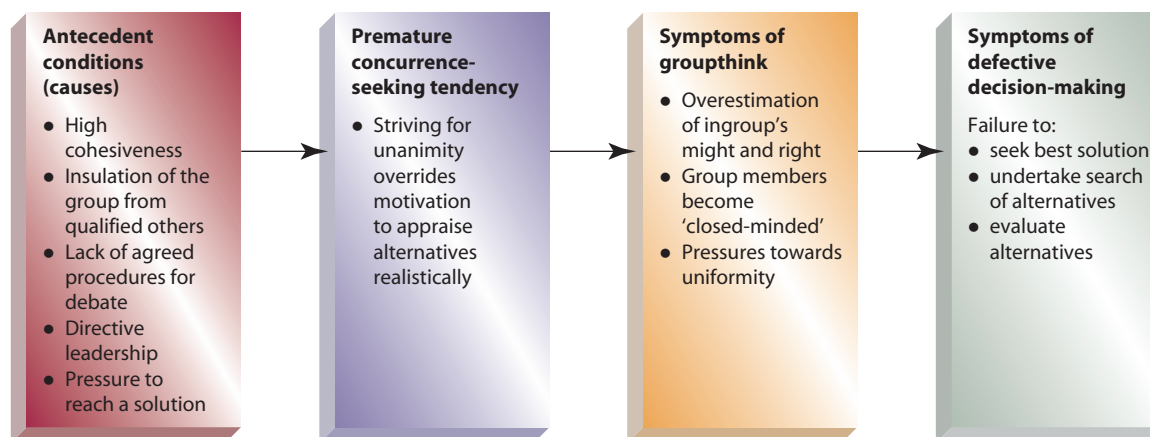
Antecedent conditions (causes)	**Premature concurrence-seeking tendency**	**Symptoms of groupthink**	**Symptoms of defective decision-making**
● High cohesiveness ● Insulation of the group from qualified others ● Lack of agreed procedures for debate ● Directive leadership ● Pressure to reach a solution	● Striving for unanimity overrides motivation to appraise alternatives realistically	● Overestimation of ingroup's might and right ● Group members become 'closed-minded' ● Pressures towards uniformity	Failure to: ● seek best solution ● undertake search of alternatives ● evaluate alternatives

Figure 11.11 *Schematic analysis of groupthink model (after Janis, 1982).*

The concept of groupthink (which alludes to Big Brother's attempt to control the way people think, in George Orwell's 1949 novel *Nineteen eighty-four*) has received a great deal of popular attention because it claims to explain a series of US foreign policy fiascos, including the calamitous Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba (1961) and the escalation of the Vietnam War (1964–1967). Janis applied work on group decisions to elite political settings by carrying out a series of case studies, in which he researched government records, political diaries and politicians' accounts of these turbulent periods (see also Raven, 1974; t'Hart, 1990). According to Janis, the main causes of groupthink include high cohesiveness, insulation of the group from external critics, opinionated leadership, lack of agreed procedures for debate and pressure to reach a solution. Specifically, Janis (1982) claimed that high cohesiveness in interaction with a stressful situation leads to groupthink; this outcome will be more likely the more structural weaknesses are present in the group (e.g., insulation, directive leadership and lack of agreed decision-making procedures).

In turn, some of the main characteristics of groupthink decision-makers are that they are more prone to: jump to premature conclusions, dismiss contradictory information, bolster preferred options, suppress dissent within the group and display excessive optimism about the outcomes (Tetlock, 1998). Such decision-making is, moreover, not restricted to foreign policy issues. Esser and Lindoerfer (1989) argued that the ill-fated decision to launch the *Challenger* space shuttle in 1986 (in which seven astronauts died as the shuttle exploded 59 seconds after ignition) had many of the hallmarks of groupthink (see also Starbuck & Farjoun, 2005).

Popular as the notion of groupthink is, its empirical basis is rather weak. Analysis of case studies, often based on content analysis of archival records (see Chapter 2, p. 23), does show increased rigidity and more simplistic thinking among decision-makers involved in groupthink decisions compared to more favourable outcomes (Tetlock, 1979). Herek, Janis and Huth (1987) also reported a negative association between the number of symptoms of groupthink and the quality of the decision. But there is little evidence that cohesiveness alone, or in combination with other supposed antecedents, contributes to defective decision-making. As Tetlock (1998) also points out, one can quite easily find successful political decisions in cases with evidence of groupthink (e.g., Churchill suppressed dissent in cabinet meeting in 1940–1941, when some group

members advocated a negotiated peace with Hitler), but also instances where vigilant decision-making failed to prevent disastrous outcomes (e.g., President Jimmy Carter's failed mission to rescue hostages from Iran in 1980, despite his encouragement of open debate).

Laboratory studies are even less supportive, perhaps because it is difficult, if not impossible, to create in the laboratory true analogues of highly cohesive, insulated groups, working under high pressure to make decisions with massive political consequences (Esser, 1998; Mullen, Anthony, Salas & Driskell, 1994). Manipulations of groupthink have generally not produced poor-quality discussions and decisions (Flowers, 1977; Leana, 1985), and groupthink has been found in groups with either high or low cohesiveness (see Aldag & Fuller, 1993; Turner, Pratkanis, Probasco & Love, 1992).

There are also fundamental weaknesses of the groupthink model. It does not allow precise predictions, it is difficult to operationalize the concept (must all the characteristics of groupthink be present to define it as such?) and it is often only applied after the fact. Thus Aldag and Fuller (1993) proposed a more general, but also more complex, group problem-solving model (see also t'Hart, Stern & Sundelius, 1995). It includes many of the features discussed by Janis, but also includes others. For example, it allows for cohesiveness to play a role, but it is seen as just one aspect of *group structure* (see Chapter 12, this volume) which, along with *decision characteristics* and *decision-making context*, determine *emergent group characteristics* (e.g., perceptions that the ingroup is moral and unanimous in its opinions). These characteristics, in turn, affect *decision process characteristics* (e.g., how carefully objectives are surveyed and whether alternatives are generated), leading ultimately to *outcomes*. We present a simplified version of this model in Figure 11.12.

Obedience to authority

As we have seen in this chapter, social influence emanates from many sources, often group members of equal status to the target of influence. Research on *obedience to authority*, which began with Stanley

obedience to authority complying with orders from a person of higher social status within a defined hierarchy or chain of command
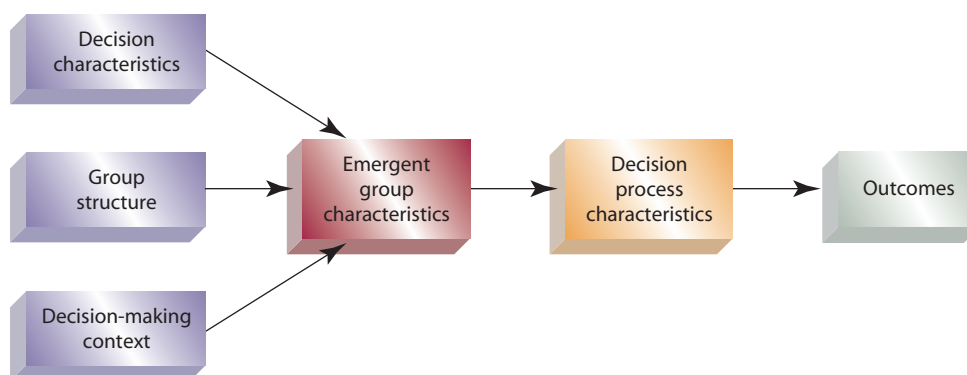

Figure 11.12 *Simplified general problem-solving model (after Aldag & Fuller, 1993).*

PIONEER

Stanley Milgram (1933–1984) earned his Bachelor's degree at Queens College, New York, in 1954, but it was in political science and he never took a psychology course as an undergraduate. He completed his PhD at Harvard University, and taught at Yale University and the New School for Social Research, New York. Although best known for his research on obedience, Milgram also studied conformity, life in cities, and did pioneering work on non-reactive measures. His research across many diverse fields is characterized by its phenomenological approach, the salience of moral issues and the importance he attached to situational determinants of social behaviour. Milgram has recently received the honour of a full-length biography, entitled *The Man Who Shocked the World: The Life and Legacy of Stanley Milgram* (Blass, 2004, Basic Books).

Source: www.stanleymilgram.com/

Plate 11.6 *Milgram's research into obedience was originally intended to help us to understand how the Nazi Holocaust could have taken place.*

Milgram's (1963) famous research, addresses a different form of influence, namely, obedience to a source who is not an equal but an authority figure. Obedience here is defined as complying with orders from a person of higher social status within a defined hierarchy or chain of command (Miller, 1995). It is often an example of the functioning of legitimate power, whereby an internalized framework of norms, values, customs and procedures specifies that such influence is appropriate (Turner, 1991; e.g., we are told to 'do as your parents/teachers/senior officers tell you'). The motives underlying obedience are diverse, including respect for the expertise of authority and fear of the consequences of disobedience. Below we shall: (1) outline Milgram's paradigm and initial results; (2) review some of the findings on the situational determinants of obedience; (3) evaluate the theoretical analysis of obedience; (4) consider ethical issues; and (5) introduce the phenomenon of disobedience.

Milgram's obedience paradigm The classic research was conducted by Milgram (1963, 1974), who intended that his experimental research should help us to understand better how the Nazi Holocaust (and all the individual acts of obedience involved in that systematic annihilation) could have taken place. Milgram was, specifically, fascinated with the trial in Jerusalem of the arch-architect of the 'Final Solution', Adolf Eichmann, as reported by the philosopher Hannah Arendt (1965) in her book *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. If such evil were 'banal', or unexceptional, then would most people show destructive obedience? Prior to his research Milgram doubted it, and indeed his first study was intended to be the 'baseline', a situation in which few people would obey. Later research was then to manipulate key variables and investigate their impact on rates of obedience (see Milgram, 1963, 1974; see also Blass, 1999, 2000; Miller, Collins & Brief, 1995).

We have already referred to some details of this notorious research to lay out principles of research methodology (see Chapter 2, this volume). Now we go into more detail, highlighting crucial aspects of the research and referring to some of the 18 studies reported by Milgram in his 1974 book. For his first study Milgram recruited 40 male participants via newspaper advertisements (no mention was made of obedience). At the laboratory, the investigator explained that a teacher–learner scenario would be used, and participants were led to believe that roles had been determined by chance. The 'victim' was, in fact, an experimental confederate. The experimenter explained that, by means of a simulated shock generator, the participant (as 'teacher') was to deliver increasingly more intense electric shocks to the 'learner' each time he made a mistake on the learning task (participants were informed that the shocks were extremely painful, but that they would cause no permanent damage; Milgram, 1963). In fact, no shocks were delivered, but the impact of the experimental scenario was so high that all participants believed that they were shocking the learner.

The learner was strapped into a chair and electrodes were fixed to his wrists. The teacher was taken to a different room, where he was instructed to punish the learner's first mistake with a shock of 15 volts, increasing in intensity by 15 volts with every new mistake. A shock generator in front of him showed the teacher 30 buttons, and clear verbal labels, ranging from 15 volts, through 60 volts ('slight shock'), to 120 volts ('moderate shock') and finally to 450 volts ('danger: severe shock, XXX'). In a clever touch, Milgram ensured that all participants experienced the reality of a relatively low-intensity electric shock (45 volts) so that they could not later claim that they had not believed they were really shocking the victim.

Milgram, a dramatist as much as an experimenter (see Blass, 1992), carefully *scripted* the whole scenario, down to the detail of having the experimenter wear a *grey* lab coat (indicating that he was a mere technician) rather than, as is frequently *mis*reported, a white coat (which might have signified that he was a higher-status physician or scientist). The victim's responses were a

predetermined series, rising in intensity with the level of shock: 'Ugh' (75, 90, 105 volts); 'Hey, this really hurts' (120 volts); 'Experimenter, get me out of here! I won't be in the experiment any more! I refuse to go on' (150 volts); screams of agony (270 volts); screams and refusal to answer (300, 315 volts); and an intense and prolonged agonized scream (330 volts). Likewise the experimenter used a graded set of commands ('prods') to keep the teacher going: 'Please continue'; 'The experiment requires that you continue'; 'It is absolutely essential that you continue'; and 'You have no other choice, you *must* go on'. In this way Milgram ensured that his experimental scenario had a very high impact on participants without sacrificing control over the situation.

The results of this baseline study were staggering. Far from the minimal level of obedience expected, no participant stopped before administering a 300 volt shock. Across the sample, maximal obedience was shown by 26 of 40 respondents: 65 per cent. By comparison, in a later study, when participants were free to choose any shock level, only 2 out of 40 participants exceeded the 150 volt level, and 28 never went beyond 75 volts.

Situational determinants of obedience The main thrust of Milgram's subsequent studies was to explore variation in the rate of obedience across different social situations. In various conditions, for example, Milgram manipulated the proximity of the victim, the authority of the experimenter and the behaviour of peers.

Four conditions varied the physical (and emotional) proximity of the victim. In one condition he pounded heavily on the wall separating his room from the teacher's; in another the participant heard his crying and shouting (as described earlier). In two other conditions the teacher and the victim were actually in the same room; in one condition, the teacher not only heard but also saw the victim; in the other condition, the teacher had to hold the victim's hand down on a shock plate. The obedience rates corresponding to these four conditions of increasing proximity are shown in Figure 11.13. Maximal obedience fell from 65 per cent of the participants to 30 per cent.

Milgram also varied the authority of the experimenter and how much control he exerted. This was hugely influential. When the experimenter was absent from the participant's room and gave his
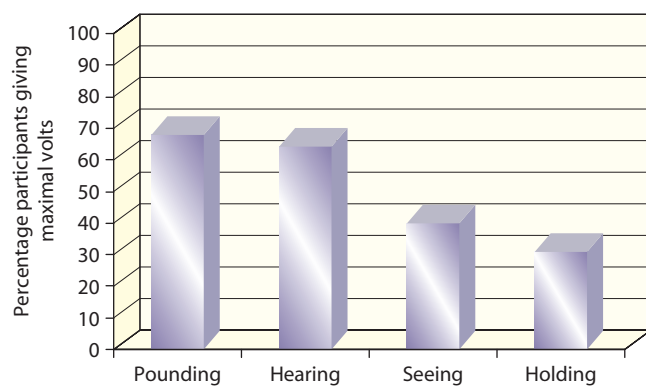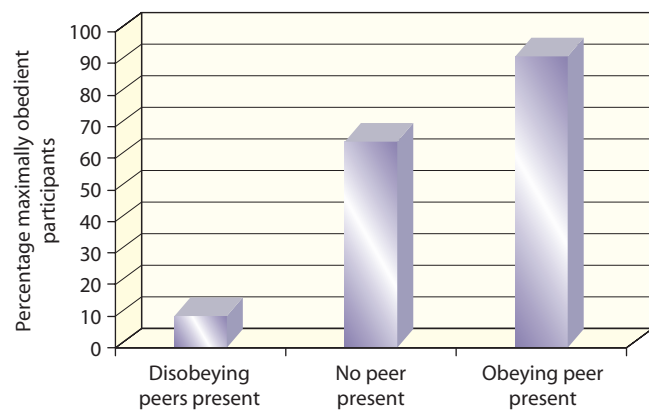

Figure 11.14 *Obedience as a function of peer behaviour (data from Milgram, 1974).*

orders over the telephone, maximal obedience dropped to 21 per cent (a number of participants said over the phone that they were giving higher shocks than they in fact did!). In another variation, the experimenter had to leave the room before instructing the participant to increase shock levels. He handed over his authority to a second participant who was present, and who would only have to record the learner's reaction times. This second participant then came up with the idea of increasing the shock level with every error and, throughout the learning session, he insisted that the teacher applied his rules. Only 20 per cent of the participants obeyed the equal-status authority to the end. In addition, when a participant refused to obey and the 'authority' decided that he would administer the shocks himself, a number of participants physically attacked the 'torturer' or tried to unplug the shock generator. Participants did not, however, show such heroism when the authority was the high-status scientist.

Two experimental variations investigated the role of peer pressure. In the first there were three co-teachers, the participant and two confederates. The first confederate presented the task, the second recorded the learner's responses and the participant administered the shocks. The first confederate refused to continue at 150 volts, and was joined by the second confederate at 210 volts. Their refusal had a dramatic effect on the participants, only 10 per cent were maximally obedient compared with 65 per cent when no peer was present (see Figure 11.14). In contrast, if the teacher, who administered the learning task, was accompanied by a co-teacher, who gave the shocks (obedient peer), 92 per cent of the participants participated in the experiment to the end.

Why do people obey? It is not convincing to argue that the participants (a majority of whom obeyed to high levels across most studies) were sadists. In one study by Milgram participants *chose* their own level of shock, and they opted for very low-level shocks. Surely sadists would have seized their opportunity here? Participants also appeared to be distressed by the experience, often appearing tense, displaying nervous laughter, sweating profusely and even begging the experimenter to stop. This tends to rule out both the possibility that participants were sadists and the claim that

Figure 11.13 *Obedience as a function of physical proximity (data from Milgram, 1974).*

they did not believe Milgram's cover story. Milgram's own theoretical analysis of obedience included four factors, which have received varying levels of support.

First, and rather descriptively, Milgram argued for the importance of socio-cultural factors. We grow up in a society where we learn (indeed, we are taught) to obey authorities, beginning with parents and school teachers, and ending with police officers. Moreover, we expect those authority figures to be legitimate and trustworthy. Second, and more persuasively, Milgram pointed to 'binding factors', the subtle creation of psychological barriers to disobedience. He used the notion of 'entrapment' to refer to the experimenter's gradual increase in punishment levels ordered (cf. the 'foot-in-the-door' technique for obtaining compliance, discussed earlier), rather than beginning with an outrageous demand which most participants would probably have refused. This subtle progression towards destructive obedience may be crucial in helping us to understand how ordinary individuals can ultimately commit acts of evil (see Browning, 1992; Darley, 1992; Kelman & Hamilton, 1989; Miller, 1986).

Third, Milgram argued that the subordinate in a hierarchical system does not accept personal responsibility for his or her actions, but allocates this responsibility to someone higher up in the organization. He referred to this as an 'agentic shift', where the obedient participants switch off their own conscience and see themselves as *agents* for carrying out a more senior person's wishes. This, of course, is a convenient, self-serving account used by many perpetrators of evil, such as the former Iraqi torturer's statement that 'I was following orders. Saddam is responsible' (reported in the *Observer*, 14 May 2006). Empirical support for this notion is, however, weak (see Nissani, 1990; Waller, 2002). Mantell and Panzarella (1976) reported no relationship between participants' degree of obedience and their assignment of responsibility. In post-experimental interviews, Milgram asked participants to divide up responsibility between the experimenter, themselves and the victim. He reported that both obedient and defiant participants attributed almost equal responsibility to the experimenter, which contradicts the claim that obedient participants somehow pass responsibility up the 'chain of command'. However, defiant participants saw themselves as more responsible (and the learner-victim as less responsible) than did the obedient participants (see Milgram, 1974, Appendix II).

Fourth, and finally, Milgram's whole research programme placed huge emphasis on the power of the situation, something that is fundamental to the study of social psychology (see Chapter 1, this volume). His findings suggest that destructive obedience is well within the behavioural repertoire of most people (Miller, 1986). Personality is not irrelevant (individuals who hold authoritarian beliefs are more likely to obey authorities; Elms & Milgram, 1966; Kelman & Hamilton, 1989), but it pales into insignificance when compared with the power of the situation. To acknowledge this fact, however, is not to exonerate the perpetrators of evil deeds and adopt a morally condoning attitude towards them (Miller, Gordon & Buddie, 1999). Harm-doing, which may well have been instigated by situational factors initially, demands self-regulation processes that definitely involve the actor-person himself (see Bandura, 1999).

Ethical issues   Milgram's research has become the most famous of all experiments in social psychology (it spawned TV programmes, a play and even a song by Peter Gabriel, *We Do What We're Told*). It speaks to the darkest side of human nature, and has been used in attempts to understand better phenomena such as genocide (Staub, 1989) and war crimes (Bourke, 1999). But it also became infamous, generating controversy centred on ethical issues (see Baumrind, 1964; Miller, 1986; see also Chapter 2, this volume). Milgram was severely criticized for inducing suffering in his participants. Using a procedure that would be impossible to replicate today given ethical guidelines for research, he induced stress and anxiety in his participants and, among those who did obey, guilt about how they had behaved. No contemporary study could inform participants that, although blatantly untrue, 'it is absolutely essential that you continue' or 'you have no other choice, you *must* go on'. Indeed, the furore caused by this research is credited with generating regulations that control the use of human participants in psychological research. More generally, some of the questions you may care to consider are: Could the participants' psychological suffering be dealt with in normal debriefing? How would participants react on learning that they were – apparently – capable of heinous acts in response to orders? Should the experiment ever have been carried out? Is the research sufficiently important to justify such deception of, and stress experienced by, participants? To what extent was the criticism triggered by the results rather than by the research itself?

Disobedience   Another valuable perspective on Milgram's research is whether the results are, in fact, so surprising. Later critics suggested that the experimenter may have played a more active role in instigating obedience than is evident from Milgram's (1965) early report (perhaps inducing obedience through demand characteristics), and that the evidence of *dis*obedience is itself remarkable (35 per cent of the participants defied the experiment at some point). Early resistance seems crucial (only 17 per cent of those showing early signs of protest delivered shocks of more than 150 volts), a finding that is consistent with Rochat and Modigliani's (1995) historical study of French citizens who, during World War II, refused to persecute war refugees in the village of Le Chambon.

Whistleblowing is a specific form of disobedience, occurring when people report corruption or unethical practice within an organization. Such behaviour is, however,

> **whistleblowing** a specific form of disobedience in which an 'insider' (e.g., an employee) reports corruption or unethical practice within an organization

relatively rare, not least because a significant proportion of whistleblowers are subjected to harassment from senior members of the organization or ostracism from peers (Glazer & Glazer, 1989; MacNamara, 1991; Miceli & Near, 1992). Whistleblowers are, in effect, critics of the ingroup, who are generally damned for their temerity (see Hornsey, 2005), and there is evidence from the medical domain suggesting that willingness to blow the whistle declines with time in training (Goldie, Schwartz, McConnachie & Morrison, 2003). Apparently, medical students learn to keep quiet by seeing the retaliation meted out to whistleblowers (Bolsin, 2003). Yet such courageous action is necessary, whether to stop

medical malpractice (as in the case of the junior doctor who blew the whistle on a senior surgeon responsible for abnormally high mortality rates in paediatric heart surgery at a hospital in Bristol, UK, during the 1990s) or mistreatment of prisoners of war (as in the case of the Navy dog handler who refused to be drawn into the abuse of Iraqi prisoners in Abu Ghraib prison; see Greenberg & Dratel, 2005).

Research on obedience in perspective Whatever your view of Milgram's experiments (ethically acceptable or not; due to demand characteristics or not), every social psychologist should read and have an opinion about Milgram's research on obedience (see Blass, 1992). Subsequent studies, in different countries and with various paradigms, have demonstrated the generality of the effect he first demonstrated (e.g., Mantell, 1971; Meeus & Raaijmakers, 1986, 1995; Shanab & Yahya, 1978) and highlighted the importance of obedience in a range of settings, including medical (Hofling, Brotzman, Dairymple, Graves & Pierce, 1966; Rank & Jacobson, 1977) and organizational contexts (cf. the financial scandal in the USA, involving Enron and Arthur Andersen; Lee Toffler & Reingold, 2003; Swartz & Watkins, 2003), and not just military ones. Milgram specifically sought to extend Asch's conformity experiment to 'something more consequential than judging lengths of lines' (Blass, 1992, p. 286). In this he was hugely successful: destructive obedience is more widespread than most of us would ever have imagined. This research can, however, provide only part of the explanation for the excesses of the Third Reich, which Milgram set out to understand. The Nazi Holocaust included many acts that were not simply acts of obedience to authority (see Browning, 1992; Goldhagen, 1996; Johnson & Reuband, 2005; Newman & Erber, 2002).

SUMMARY

The study of deliberate social influence introduces some of the most celebrated experiments ever carried out by social psychologists. We began by considering three main techniques of compliance, based on requests – the door-in-the-face, the foot-in-the-door and lowballing. Next, we reviewed the literature on majority vs. minority social influence, showing how the field has moved from a narrow focus on majority influence only to an understanding that both majorities and minorities can be influential, and in various ways. We then reported on the tendency of groups to polarize individual members' views and linked this to some of the extreme consequences of social influence in groups, as seen in groupthink. Finally, we reviewed research on obedience to authority, including Milgram's classic research and its ethical consequences, and the phenomenon of whistleblowing.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- This chapter discussed two main types of social influence, 'incidental' and 'deliberate', and how they can be understood in terms of fundamental motives.

- Social influence refers to change of attitudes, beliefs, opinions, values and behaviour as a result of being exposed to other individuals' attitudes, beliefs, opinions, values and behaviour. It forms the interface between individualistic and group approaches to social psychology.

- Incidental social influence refers to situations in which people are influenced, although there has been no explicit attempt to influence them.

- People are influenced by the presence or implied presence of others, which tends to improve performance on simple/well-learned tasks but worsen performance on complex/novel tasks.

- Social norms are the most fundamental concept in the study of social influence. They can be descriptive or injunctive, we can infer them from other people's behaviour, and they can be easily established and transmitted.

- Social influence is driven by some of the fundamental motives directing human social behaviour. Ultimately, we are influenced by others so that we behave proficiently, build and maintain relationships with others, manage our own self-concept, and understand the social world more effectively.

- Deliberate social influence includes compliance with requests, the influence of numerical majorities and minorities, group decision-making and obedience to authority.

- There is evidence for each of the three main techniques of compliance – door-in-the-face, foot-in-the-door and lowballing – which rely greatly on general principles such as equity, reciprocity and self-consistency.

- Both numerical majorities and minorities can exert influence, and the major explanations concern conflict and social categorization. Majorities tend to have greater influence on public and direct measures, but minorities can be more effective on indirect, private measures.

- Groups tend to polarize decisions, due to normative, informational and referent influence. So-called groupthink is an extreme form of poor decision-making, but this model has fundamental weaknesses.

- Obedience to immoral authority is primarily driven by situational factors, but we still lack a clear explanation of why it occurs. Research on this topic poses important ethical

questions, and more recent work on whistleblowing underlines the moral importance of disobedience.

● Social influence is an ambivalent concept. The very existence of a society depends on it, but it can be a force for good (e.g., donations to charity) as well as for bad (e.g., tyranny of the majority), and even evil (e.g., obedience to authority leading to immoral behaviour).

Suggestions for further reading

Asch, S.E. (1956). Studies of independence and conformity: A minority of one against a unanimous majority. *Psychological Monographs*, *70*(9), Whole no. 416. This text presents Asch's own account of his famous conformity experiments. The best way to learn about these studies is to read them first hand.

Baron, R.S. & Kerr, N. (2003). *Group process, group decision, group action* (2nd edn). Buckingham: Open University Press. Extends the material presented in this chapter on social facilitation, majority and minority influence and group decision-making.

Cialdini, R.B. & Trost, M.R. (1998). Social influence: Social norms, conformity, and compliance. In D.T. Gilbert, S.T.

Fiske & G. Lindzey (Eds.), *The handbook of social psychology* (4th edn, Vol. 2, pp. 151–192). New York: McGraw-Hill. Authoritative source, especially good on norms and compliance strategies.

Janis, I.L. (1972). *Victims of groupthink*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. Janis's original presentation of groupthink, illustrated with case materials showing disastrous decision-making in the area of foreign policy.

Martin, R. & Hewstone, M. (2003). Social influence. In M. Hogg & J. Cooper (Eds.), *Sage handbook of social psychology* (pp. 347–366). London: Sage.

Milgram, S. (1974). *Obedience to authority*. New York: Harper & Row. Compelling and readable overview of Milgram's own programme of 18 experiments, and the furore they unleashed.

Miller, A.G., Collins, B.E. & Brief, D.E. (Eds.) (1995). Perspectives on obedience to authority: The legacy of the Milgram experiments. *Journal of Social Issues*, *51*, 1–212. A journal special issue on reactions to Milgram's obedience research and subsequent theory and research on obedient and defiant behaviour.

Turner, J.C. (1991). *Social influence*. Buckingham: Open University Press. A scholarly overview of the whole field, with a sophisticated theoretical analysis from the perspective of self-categorization theory.