

Social Influence and Threat to Identity : Does the Fight Against Tobacco use Require a Ban on Smoking ?¹

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Résumé

L'étude a exposé 88 fumeurs à un plaidoyer antitabac provenant d'une source de statut supérieur ou inférieur. La moitié des sujets ne pouvait pas fumer pendant la session expérimentale. L'autre moitié avait cette possibilité, et on a distingué parmi les sujets ceux qui ont fumé et ceux qui ne l'ont pas fait. Trois mesures ont été introduites : le changement (pré-test/post-test) de l'accord manifeste avec des propositions tirées du plaidoyer et de l'intention d'arrêter de fumer, et l'origine attribuée à des idées générées à propos du plaidoyer. Les résultats pour l'accord manifeste montrent que celui-ci augmente avec la source de statut supérieur, et non pas avec la source de statut inférieur. Quant au changement de l'intention, il donne lieu à une interaction. Face à la source de statut inférieur, ce sont ceux qui n'ont pas fumé qui changent davantage, qu'ils aient eu ou non la possibilité

Abstract

In this study 88 smokers were exposed to an anti-smoking argument from a source with either higher or lower status. Smoking was not allowed for half of the subjects during the experimental session. The other half were permitted to smoke; as a result some did and some did not. Three measures were examined: the pre- to post-test change in overt agreement with the propositions contained in the argument, change in intention to give up smoking, and the origin attributed to ideas generated in relation to the argument. Results for the first measure indicate that overt agreement increased when the source had high status but not when it had low status. There was an interaction effect with respect to change in intention. Faced with a low status source, those who had not smoked changed more. Faced with a high status source, those who were able to smoke changed more than

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those who were not able, and those who had actually smoked changed most. In addition, those subjects confronted with a high status source located their ideas more in the influence relation with the source while those faced with a low status source located their ideas psychologically prior to this relation. These results were predicted on the basis of the hypothesis that, when smokers are faced with a source which introduces a relation constraining their agreement, they need to confirm their identity in a positive way. If there is to be any fundamental change in attitude, and such a confirmation is provided in this case by the act of smoking. Faced with a low status source, the act of smoking plays a role of simple resistance to change.

Introduction

Current legislative action legitimating the prohibition of smoking in public places (cf. World Health Organization, 1988; 1993; Roemer, 1983) is considered to be among the means of persuading smokers to give up their habit. Recent results suggest that allowing smokers to smoke can, nevertheless, have a beneficial effect on their decision to give up smoking (Pérez, Falomir & Mugny, 1995). During the course of an experimental session, which involved reading an anti-smoking argument attributed either to a high status source (a group of university professors) or a low status source (a minority group), smokers were either allowed to smoke or not. The results showed that the smokers confronted with the high status source strengthened their intention to give up smoking if they were allowed to smoke, the interpretation being that the act of smoking represented a way of moderating relational stress. To be confronted with a high status source involves more tension than if the source has low status (cf. Nemeth, 1986), and the act of smoking

assures an intermediate, optimal level of activation (cf. Maass, 1987). Liberating the target from the tension introduced by the source thus leads to a reduction in the strength with which the target's initial attitude is defended, so that the target becomes more open to the point of view advocated by the source. This effect will be specific to relations with a high status source, because when the source has low status, the act of smoking has a negative effect on change.

These rather paradoxical findings suggest an analysis of this type of influence situation in terms of the threat to identity produced by the influence relation. Why should there be this greater relational stress when faced with a source that possesses high status? First of all, such a source produces a higher level of attention to the influence relation itself, such that the subject sees him or herself as manifestly the target of influence. Cognitive activity is thus focussed on the process of social comparison between target and source (cf. Guillon & Personnaz, 1983; Moscovici, 1980), and the comparison is *a priori* disadvantageous to the target. Consequently a persuasive constraint is made salient, namely the perceived obligation to conform to the point of view of a source that has higher status by virtue of its expertise. The salience, and the probable result of, a social comparison favourable to the source and the feeling of being constrained to submit to the influence relation will be combined with the perception of a threat to identity inherent in the anti-smoking content which explicitly challenges the subjects themselves, who are all smokers. The targets will then be more motivated to engage in a strategy of protection of their threatened identity (cf. Breakwell, 1988; Chaiken, Giner-Sorolla & Chen, 1996), rather than drawing any personal conclusions from the content of the persuasive message. In brief, rather than elaborate on the conflict introduced by the message (which questions the smoker's identity and the practice of smoking), smokers elaborate upon the divergence of viewpoints as a conflict of identity (Falomir, Mugny, Sanchez-Mazas, Pérez & Carrasco, in press).

The aim of the present study was therefore first of all to replicate the results obtained in the Pérez *et al.* (1995) study which showed an interaction between the status of the source and the opportunity to smoke, and to examine this interpretation in terms of investment in identity more directly. To test the nature of the relationship created by the status of the source, measures of direct influence were examined, in this case agreement with the content of the anti-smoking message. The first hypothesis was that overt elaboration of the attitude should be determined by the explicit influence relation, namely the status of the source, a high status source being more likely to lead smokers to express their agreement with an anti-smoking position (cf. Moscovici, 1980).

The crucial measure, however, concerned the intention to stop smoking, or personal commitment to a change in behaviour,

which implies in particular a personalised elaboration of an attitude (cf. Aizen & Fishbein, 1977). The hypothesis was that it is at this level that the threat to identity requires a positive assertion of identity if influence is to occur. It is therefore at this level that the dynamics introduced by the option of smoking should operate. Given that the possibility of smoking offers a positive reassertion of identity, it is expected that the influence of a high status source will be greater in this case. Such should not be the case when the source has low status; here influence should arise from the intensity of the conflict induced (cf. Moscovici, 1980) rather than because identity is at stake.

One question remains, however: when identity is reasserted, is it achieved by the fact of being able to smoke or by the act of smoking itself? In effect, the option to smoke, as it was operationalised in the study by Pérez *et al.* (1995) allows for another explanation. In practice, in that study the possibility of smoking confounded permission to smoke with actually smoking and the impossibility of smoking confounded the prohibition of smoking with the fact of not smoking. Now the option to smoke could play a dual role. On the one hand, it may diminish the salience of constraint, by rendering temporarily inoperative a social norm regulating behaviour, in this case the common place prohibition of smoking in public places. On the other hand, by allowing expression of a behaviour which runs counter to the persuasive intention of the source, through this action the target regains a certain autonomy in the face of the source. Also, in contrast to the Pérez *et al.*, study in which subjects in the condition allowing smoking were in practice encouraged to smoke and had in the event all smoked, the procedure in the present experiment was to be different. In the condition allowing smoking, the experimenter neither encouraged the smokers to smoke nor did he discourage smoking if anyone wished to do so, and this enabled a division of subjects into those who smoked in this condition and those who did not.

Our hypothesis was that the act of smoking should allow the subject to modify the persuasive relation with the high status source, since it is only by smoking that the subject preserves his or her identity (if he or she does not smoke he/she submits to the source). Because the conflict of viewpoints is not interpreted in terms of an influence relationship when the source has low status, the act of smoking should not play any role in asserting identity. In this case, to smoke should become the simple expression of rejection of a point of view which *a priori* lacks any particular expertise or credibility; thus smoking should counteract its influence.

Finally, the study also attempted to provide some support for this interpretation in terms of the type of elaboration of the conflict (cf. Pérez & Mugny, 1993; 1996) introduced by each influence source. The hypothesis being that, faced with a source of higher status, the conflict is more likely to be perceived as

located in the relationship with the source itself, one should therefore expect that subjects will be more inclined to perceive that their thinking is directed by the ideas advanced by the source. In contrast, when faced with a low status source the conflict should be perceived as situated outside the relation with the source, and so it is expected that subjects will judge their thinking to be more dependent either on their own previous ideas or to be self-generated.

Method

Subjects. Of 97 students who participated, 88 were included in the analysis (71 women and 17 men, aged 18 to 35; median age: 21 years). These 88 satisfied minimal criteria for being considered as smokers: they had smoked for at least a year, smoked at least five cigarettes a day (average consumption was 15 cigarettes a day), and had not expressed in the pre-test a strong intention to give up smoking.

Procedure. The procedure in this study, which was presented as a study on memory, was similar to that in the Pérez *et al.* (1995) study. In a 2 x 2 design, following a pre-test subjects were exposed to a strongly anti-smoking message originating from either a high or a low status source. After the subjects had been given or not given the opportunity to smoke, the experiment ended with a post-test.

Pretest. Following questions about various biographical details and their smoking habits, subjects were asked to indicate whether they intended to give up smoking soon (1 = no, 7 = yes; the mean response on this measure in the pre-test was 3.51).

Next subjects expressed their degree of agreement with six items extracted from the text they were to read later (three of these were arguments, for example, "smokers smoke because a false need has been created in them", and the other three were claims, for example, "it is necessary to increase the duty on tobacco"; 1 = agree, 7 = disagree). The mean over six items was 3.66 (alpha = .76).

Status of the source. The anti-smoking text was presented next (cf. Pérez *et al.*, 1995), attributed in half of the conditions to a high status source ("a group of university professors"), and in the other half to a low status source ("a group of high school students").

Option to smoke. Subjects were next asked to memorise a list of 16 adjectives which could be applied to the source (half were positive, half negative). After this they had to wait in silence for four minutes, during which they either did or did not have the opportunity to smoke. In the condition which allowed smoking, ashtrays were available so that subjects who wished to smoke

could do so. The experimenter, who in contrast to the Pérez *et al.* (1995) study did not actively encourage subjects to smoke during the experiment, discreetly made a note of those subjects who did in fact smoke. For the condition in which smoking was not allowed, the ashtrays were removed from the room and two notices further emphasised the prohibition. When subjects asked if they could smoke, the experimenter indicated it was not his decision by stressing that the ban was due to the lack of ventilation in the room. It should be noted that no subject smoked in this condition².

Post-test. The post-test involved the same measures of intention to give up smoking and agreement with the source ($\alpha = .81$) as were used in the pre-test. The measures of change were the differences between post-test and pre-test responses, a positive value reflecting a positive influence of the source. As in the Pérez *et al.* (1995) study, the differences between post-test and pre-test were first of all subject to a square-root transformation in order to provide greater homogeneity of variance (*cf.* Kirk, 1968). The analyses of variance carried out on these change scores were adjusted to make allowance for the corresponding pre-test scores. One tailed tests were carried out on the decomposed effects.

Origin of ideas associated with the anti-smoking text. Finally, subjects were asked to indicate the first five ideas which came into their minds in relation to the text they had read earlier. With respect to each idea they had to indicate (in percentages) the degree to which they had thought this before reading the text (an idea preceding the text), the degree to which they had literally restated the text (an idea derived directly from the text), and the degree to which the idea had come into their minds for the first time at that moment (a self-generated idea), the combined percentages to equal 100.

Results

The option to smoke

The transformed means for changes are presented in table 1. A 2 x 2 analysis of variance was carried out for each change mea-

2. A supplementary variable was introduced in this study; the task of recalling the list of characteristics was introduced either immediately at the beginning of the post-test or at the end of the experiment. This variable is not considered further due to the fact that it produced no effect on any of the measures used, in contrast to the Pérez *et al.* (1995) study. It is furthermore impossible to draw any conclusion as to whether it was the measure or the content to be memorised that was the relevant difference between the two studies (In Pérez *et al.*, subjects memorised extracts of the source's message).

sure, the variables being the status of the source and availability of the option to smoke (independently of whether subjects availed themselves of the opportunity when it was provided).

Change in agreement with the source. The only significant effect was for the status of the source; when the source had high status there was greater change towards the position advocated in its arguments ($M = + 0.36$) than when the source had low status ($M = - 0.02$; $F(1,84) = 7.72, p < 0.007$). Separate analyses in terms of the content of this measure (arguments versus claims) showed that this effect was significant for claims ($F(1,84) = 3.48, p < 0.07$) but not for arguments ($F(1,84) = 1.53, p < 0.22$).

Change in intention to stop smoking. As in the Pérez *et al.* (1995) study, there was an interaction between the status of the source and presence or absence of the option to smoke ($F(1,84) = 4.12, p < 0.05$). Examination of differences between individual means revealed that when subjects were not allowed to smoke, the high status source produced less change ($M = 0.38$) than the low status source ($M = 0.90$; $t(84) = 1.69, p < 0.05$); the influence of this latter source was significantly reduced when subjects were allowed to smoke if they wished ($t(84) = 1.68, p < 0.05$). When subjects could smoke, the high status source had, in contrast, more influence ($M = 0.86$) than the low status source ($M = 0.38, t(84) = 1.54, p < 0.07$). Finally, the high status source tended to have more influence in this condition than when subjects could not smoke ($t(84) = 1.55, p < 0.07$).

These results confirm those observed in the Pérez *et al.* (1995) experiment. Nonetheless, the difference found in the current experiment between the two sources when subjects could smoke was modest. On the basis of our predictions, this relatively weak effect of a high status source could have been due to subjects not actually smoking when they were able to do so. Therefore an analysis was carried out comparing subjects who did and did not smoke to enable us to test this hypothesis.

The act of smoking

In the condition which allowed subjects to smoke, whether they exercised this choice or not was independent of the sex of the subjects, their age, how long they had been smokers, how many

Tableau 1
Change in agreement with the persuasive message and in intention to give up smoking (A plus align corresponds to a positive influence of the source; standard deviations and numbers of subjects in parentheses)

Status of the source :	Agreement with the persuasive message		Intention to give up smoking	
	Higher	Lower	Higher	Lower
Not allowed to smoke	0.31 (0.71 ; 22)	- 0.05 (0.65 ; 22)	0.38 (1.04 ; 22)	0.90 (1.01 ; 22)
Allowed to smoke	0.42 (0.71 ; 22)	0.04 (0.76 ; 22)	0.86 (0.89 ; 22)	0.38 (1.11 ; 22)
Did not smoke	0.36 (0.96 ; 8)	0.07 (0.84 ; 9)	0.60 (1.14 ; 8)	0.90 (0.86 ; 9)
Smoked	0.46 (0.54 ; 14)	- 0.12 (0.73 ; 13)	1.00 (0.72 ; 14)	0.02 (1.15 ; 13)

samples. The differences for the high status source were significant for subjects who had smoked ($t/13 = 3.26, p < 0.01$), but not for those who had not smoked, whether they had the opportunity ($t/7 = 1.17, n.s.$) or not ($t/21 = 1.55, n.s.$). When the source had low status, the changes were significant for the subjects who did not smoke, whether they had been allowed to do so ($t/8 = 2.72, p < 0.03$) or not allowed ($t/21 = 3.44, p < 0.002$), but not for those who did smoke ($t/12 = 0.77, n.s.$).

Origin of ideas associated with the anti-smoking text

Subjects wrote down on average 4.72 ideas associated with the text; there were no differences in the numbers between conditions. As regards the origin of these ideas, a $2 \times 2 \times 3$ analysis of variance was carried out in which origin (preceding the text, produced by the text, self-generated) was introduced as a repeated measure. First of all, the analysis confirmed a main within-subject effect ($F/2,166 = 29.18$); the percentage of ideas regarded as new was very substantially lower ($M = 13.53\%$) than the percentage considered as already familiar prior to reading the text ($M = 44.70\%$; $F/1,83 = 70.56, p < 0.001$) or as derived from the text ($M = 41.64\%$; $F/1,83 = 53.12, p < 0.001$), while the difference between these latter two was not significant ($F/1,83 = 0.32, p < 0.29$).

Similarly, there was an interaction between the origin of ideas and source status ($F/2,166 = 3.38, p < 0.04$; cf. Table 2). Comparison of individual means revealed that ideas were more likely to be perceived as derived directly from reading the text when its source was of high status than when it had come from a low status source ($F/1,83 = 3.22, p < 0.04$), while the ideas were more often perceived as predating the reading of the text when this text had originated with a low status source than when its authors had high status ($F/1,83 = 4.49, p < 0.02$). The degree of novelty (ideas perceived as spontaneously self-generated) did not vary as a function of source status ($F/1,83 = 0.40, p < 0.26$).

Tableau 2 :
Origin of ideas generated (in percentages; standard deviations in parentheses)

	Status of source	
	Higher status	Lower status
Prior to reading the text	39.52 (24.86)	50.00 (29.01)
Derived from the text	47.85 (26.77)	35.30 (28.15)
Self-generated	12.49 (13.86)	14.59 (16.98)

attempts they had made to give up smoking, whether or not they intended to give up smoking in the near future, the degree of their initial agreement with the persuasive message, or the status of the influence source. It was, however, associated with the number of cigarettes they normally smoked ($F/1,42 = 15.22, p < 0.001$); those who did not smoke in the experiment were on average heavier smokers ($M = 20.35$ cigarettes per day) than those who did smoke ($M = 12.85$ cigarettes per day). As only this single criterion separated them it was difficult to draw conclusions as to the cause of their "choice". Furthermore, the number of cigarettes smoked correlated with change neither in agreement with the message nor in intention to quit smoking. Two further 2×3 analyses of variance were therefore carried out, the first variable being status of the source, the second comparing subjects not permitted to smoke ($n = 44$) with those who were permitted but did not ($n = 17$) and those who were permitted and did in fact smoke ($n = 27$). The mean changes in these different groups are presented in table 1.

Change in agreement with the source. Analysis of change in agreement with the source revealed only the previously noted effect of the status of the source ($F/1,82 = 5.53, p < 0.021$).

Change in intention to give up smoking. As regards analysis of changes in intention to quit smoking, this again revealed an interaction between the two variables ($F/2,82 = 4.87, p < 0.01$). With respect to the high status source, a one-tailed test of mean differences confirmed that subjects unable to smoke changed less ($M = 0.38$) than those who were permitted to smoke and did so ($M = 1.00$; $t/82 = 1.82, p < 0.04$) but they did not differ significantly from those who were able to smoke but did not do so ($M = 0.60$; $t/82 = 0.54, p < 0.30$). The subjects who had smoked did not differ from those who were able to but did not ($t/82 = 0.90, p < 0.20$), but they tended to change more when compared to all subjects who had not smoked ($t/82 = 1.51, p < 0.07$). As regards subjects exposed to a low status source, those who were not allowed to smoke changed more ($M = 0.90$) than those who were permitted to smoke and did so ($M = 0.02$; $t/82 = 2.49, p < 0.01$), though the former did not differ significantly from those who were permitted to smoke but did not exercise the option ($M = 0.90$; $t/82 = 0.00, n.s.$). The subjects who were permitted to smoke and did so changed less than those permitted to smoke who did not do so ($t/82 = 2.01, p < 0.03$) and less when compared to all the non-smoking subjects ($t/82 = 2.56, p < 0.01$).

Among the subjects who had the option of smoking, those who took the opportunity changed more when the source had high status than when the source had low status ($t/82 = 2.53, p < 0.01$) while among those who did not take this opportunity there was no effect of source status ($t/82 = 0.61, p < 0.27$). Finally, it should be noted that pre- to post-test changes were analysed, condition by condition, using t -tests for related

Discussion

The first point to make is that, at the level of overt influence, the high status source increased agreement with its message more than did the low status source, which produced no change. However, at the level of personal commitment to a change in behaviour (the intention to give up smoking), the dynamics that emerged were also linked to the option of smoking and corroborate those described in the Pérez *et al.* (1995) study: when smokers were forbidden to smoke this increased the influence of the low status source and diminished the influence of the high status source but when they were allowed to smoke if they wished this increased the influence of the high status source and diminished that of the low status source. A novel feature of the present study was to show that it was not so much the norm introduced in this situation (a norm either allowing or excluding smoking) as the act of smoking itself that played the enabling role in these latter dynamics.

These results are consistent with the hypothesis that individuals confronted with a high status source of influence need an opportunity to reassert their identity in a positive fashion if they are to be able to modify their attitude in any depth (Falomir, Mugny & Pérez, 1993), an opportunity which is provided when they smoke and consequently when they have reaffirmed their autonomy in the influence relation. In the contrasting case in which smoking is not possible, the threat to identity inherent in the contents of the message is construed as an identity conflict. The elaboration of a divergence from the high status source is characterised here by the salience of this attack on identity and consequently by the motivation of the individual to protect it. The perceived origin of the ideas produced about the anti-smoking text offers one piece of evidence in support of such an explanation. It can be observed that, as predicted, targets locate their thoughts in the influence relation with the source, since their ideas seem to them to have arisen mainly from reading the latter's argument. Given that the superior status of the source makes this an unfavourable relation for the targets, one imagines that the targets are more motivated to protect their identity (cf. Breakwell, 1988), and this inhibits any underlying change. Only the positive assertion of identity, achieved in this case by the act of smoking, allows targets to adopt a less defensive posture towards the difference in points of view (Falomir & Pérez, 1995).

The lack of influence of a lower status source when subjects smoke indicates that such an act does not play any similarly facilitative role when subjects are placed in an influence relation which is not unfavourable for them. This observation is consistent with the notion that, when faced with a low status source,

social comparison is not salient. Factors accentuating the conflict (here the fact of not smoking) serve to focus subjects upon the debate of ideas, under which circumstances influence depends on the intensity of the conflict (Moskovic, 1980). Elaboration of the difference is characterised by internalisation of the conflict introduced by the source's view point (Pérez *et al.*, 1995), to the degree that social comparison with the low status source is not constraining. The origin attributed to the ideas produced about the anti-smoking text provides further support for this explanation. In the face of a low status source, thought is more likely to be located as psychologically prior to this relation, suggesting a manner of dealing with the difference that is from the outset dissociated from the relation with the source. This logic of dissociation (Pérez & Mugny, 1990a) allows, however, only a negative assertion of identity (by, for example, not smoking) which gives rise not to a conflict of identity but to an elaboration of the message content on the basis of the divergence. In this case change in subjects corresponds to their behaviour: when they do not smoke they change the most, and do so more than when faced with a high status source. The absence of an unfavourable influence relation thus creates conditions of autonomy and independence facilitating internal attributions which obscure any threat to identity associated with the influence relation. This result brings us to explanations which might be considered in future research, notably explanations in terms of dissonance (for example, "If I do not smoke when the source does not have the authority to forbid me from smoking, it is because I am myself convinced that I do not wish to smoke"). The importance here of an absence of identity stakes has already been explored in the literature (Cooper & Mackie, 1983; for a review, see Clemence, 1995).

Is it possible to explain these effects in terms of psychological reactance? On the one hand, it is known that a high status source is more likely to be perceived as a threat to the liberty and autonomy of targets, and that this can engender a motivational state of psychological reactance, reducing the influence obtained (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). On the other hand, other studies conducted within the framework of psychological reactance theory have demonstrated that features of the influence context operating to reduce the degree of reactance produced by a threatening source (for example, not being under the control of a source possessing power, Heilman, 1976; dissidence demonstrated by another in the face of the threat, Worchel & Brehm, 1971) facilitate the influence of the source. A major difficulty with such an explanation is that agreement with the message increases when the source has high status. Because subjects do not choose to reclaim their freedom at the level of overt agreement with the source, one has to conclude that the threat contributes to a conflict of identity which is elaborated at the latent level.

Finally, it is evident that the subjects who are more likely to increase their status and a reduction in influence when the source has high status and a reduction in influence when the source has low status. Merely allowing smoking is not enough to induce influence in subjects to any significant degree if they then refrain from smoking despite the option to do so. In brief, the act of smoking is confirmed to be in itself a regulative element of identity. Only this act truly allows smokers to reaffirm their freedom and their autonomy in the context of a salient and constraining influence relation.

By way of conclusion, it may be noted that Leventhal and Cleary (1980) have already suggested that the efforts put into persuasion through the medium of mass communication have been misguided, observing that they have rarely had an impact proportional to the resources employed (cf. Roberts & Maccoby, 1985). Certainly, one knows that smokers accept willingly enough that it may not be acceptable to smoke in closed spaces (for example, only 15% of smokers report never having asked non-smokers if they might smoke in such places; GVDGSP, 1993), that they consider it legitimate to introduce social measures against smoking (Becona, 1995; Echebarria, Fernandez & Gonzalez, 1994), and that they believe that respect for non-smokers is more important than the freedom to smoke (Pérez & Mugny, 1990b). The use of measures or actions (relating to social norms) does therefore produce direct effects on beliefs and attitudes (cf. Atkinson & Townsend, 1977; Becona, 1995; Lichtenstein, Biglan et al., 1990; Thompson, 1978; Villalbi, Auba & Gonzalez, 1993). The use of such measures, however, also activates a feeling of constraint in the target, all the more so as the threat which is felt demands acceptance, and this obstructs deeper processes of change. When campaigns rely upon high status sources (such as experts), it seems that "consideration for the smoker, the care never to humiliate him holds more pleasant surprises than one might imagine" (Hirsch & Karsenty, 1992, p. 114). Given such a logic, allowing smokers to smoke can paradoxically cause them to consider quitting smoking more than if they had been forbidden to smoke.

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Statistique classique et/ou logique de Boole dans l'analyse d'un questionnaire de représentation sociale : l'exemple du sport

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Key words
Data analysis, social
representation.

Mots clés
Analyse de données,
représentation sociale.

Résumé

La représentation sociale du sport est étudiée dans chacune de cinq populations contrastées quant à leur pratique du sport : des non-sportifs à des sportifs de haut niveau (comme l'Equipe de France de handball et le XV de France de rugby). Un même questionnaire, acceptable par chaque population, fait apparaître une structure unilinéaire de « sportivité ». On identifie l'« archétype » du sportif, et celui du non-sportif, et tous les sujets sont situés par rapport à ces archétypes. En l'absence de résultats par les méthodes classiques, une analyse en termes de logique booléenne permet une différenciation des sujets à l'intérieur de chaque population. Cette recherche est essentiellement méthodologique.

Abstract

The social representation of Sports was studied within five populations contrasted on the basis of their practice of sports: from non-sports-people to high-level sportsmen. The analysis of responses to a questionnaire showed an unilinear structure of « sportsmanship ». The archetypes of sportsman and non-sportsman were identified and each subject was located in relation to these archetypes. Applying classical statistics did not provide results, but an analysis using the Boole Algebra showed a differentiation between subjects within each population. The aim of this study was essentially methodological.

1. Motivation de l'étude

On constate que les études de représentation sociale peuvent se faire avec des questionnaires de tailles très variables : souvent, des « petits » questionnaires (15 à 20 items, comme le

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