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**UNDERSTANDING  
GROUP BEHAVIOR**

*Small Group Processes and  
Interpersonal Relations*

**Volume 2**

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## THE CONFLICT ELABORATION THEORY OF SOCIAL INFLUENCE

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### THE ISSUES IN THE DEBATE

For several decades, social influence phenomena have provided the basis for a great variety of theoretical, experimental, and applied studies (cf. Allen, 1975; Cialdini, 1985; Levine & Russo, 1987; Moscovici, 1985; Mugny, 1982; Paicheler, 1988; Turner, 1991; Zanna, Olson, & Herman, 1987). This diversification has given rise to a debate about explanations (cf. Doms, 1983; Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Latané & Wolf, 1981; Moscovici, 1976; Tanford & Penrod, 1984; Wolf, 1987).

From this debate it has emerged that the dominant explanations—models or theories—are subject to three kinds of complementary “biases” relating to the expected effects of sources and their levels of influence (cf. Mugny, Butera, Sanchez-Mazas, & Pérez, 1994). Whereas some theories focus on the conformity to majority, expert, or ingroup sources, others put back into the melting pot the studies demonstrating the latent influence of minority, discredited, and outgroup sources. This distinction between manifest and latent influence (Moscovici, 1980) has played a crucial role in more recent research (Wood, Lundgren, Ouellette, Busceme, & Blackstone, 1994), but has also largely complicated the problem of theorizing the multiple social influence processes (Chaiken & Stangor, 1987).

Furthermore, a great variety of tasks has been used, without enough care having been given to the specific consequences of using one task or another (Maass, West, & Cialdini, 1987).

The cumulative and sometimes contradicting experimental evidence (cf. Kruglanski & Mackie, 1990; Maass & Clark, 1984) is such that it has now become

imperative to develop a psychosocial model that can account for these various strands within a more encompassing framework. Conflict elaboration theory (CET; Pérez & Mugny, 1993) is an attempt to integrate research on social influence phenomena in order to lead to new insights about the various processes confounded under the generic notion of "social influence."

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This theory initiated from the idea that, in spite of the multiple types of tasks, sources, levels of influence, and processes in which influence operates, all these factors could be understood from a common basic explicative notion: *conflict elaboration*.

Social influence is understood as the modification of what the person or the group would have done in a different way if they had not been exposed to this influence. A fundamental postulate is that influence will be a consequence of any divergence with any other. The notion of conflict elaboration refers to the way people think about this divergence and give it a meaning. The specific elaboration of the conflict is hypothesized depending on the type of task, as well as on the type of source introducing the divergence. The following are three general hypotheses of the CET:

1. Given the same amount of judgment divergence supported by *two different sources*, conflict will be elaborated in two different ways.
2. Given a similar degree of divergence in judgment maintained by the same source in *two different tasks*, conflict will be elaborated in two different ways.
3. Different ways of conflict elaboration will correspond to *different patterns of manifest and/or latent influence*.

Let us first consider how conflict elaboration is elicited in different ways depending (a) on the nature of the task and (b) on the nature of the source. We then see how one specific conflict resolution process in each case leads to a particular pattern of influences resulting from each conflict elaboration. In effect, CET is aimed at predicting the most probable pattern of manifest and latent influences (resolution process), taking into consideration that different types of sources should activate different socio-cognitive dynamics in different types of tasks (conflict elicitation).

### Relevant Dimensions of the Tasks

CET postulates the functioning in the "lay epistemology" (Kruglanski, 1989) of specific preconceptions that are ordinarily applied in order to determine the validity of the judgments in a given task. So CET does not describe the task's

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properties in themselves, but the task dimensions psychologically relevant for subjects faced with a divergence in the social influence encounter (Maggi & Mugny, 1995). Two preconceptions are of particular importance in the study of social influence:

1. One is concerned with whether subjects believe that the task allows for a demonstrably (see Laughlin, 1980) right answer, all others being wrong, or whether they consider it a task in which one cannot determine objectively what is right and what is wrong. On this dimension CET differentiates tasks where relevance of error is high versus low for targets.
2. A second preconception is whether the task is considered by targets as one in which the responses are socially qualifying the targets, that is, define their membership to a given social category rather than to another, or assign them a particular (low versus high) rank position within a category, or whether the task lacks such social implications. On this dimension CET distinguishes socially anchoring tasks from non socially anchoring tasks.

Crossing these two socio-epistemic dimensions we obtain four types of task representations that should account for most, if not all, possible paradigms for the study of social influence: (a) Task: Objective, Nonambiguous (TONA), (b) Task: APtitudes (TAP), (c) Task: OPInion (TOP), and (d) Task: Nonimplicating (TANI). Let us consider now how the divergence introduced by a source will be elaborated as one type of conflict or another depending on the specific socio-epistemic preconceptions corresponding to each task (see Fig. 7.1).

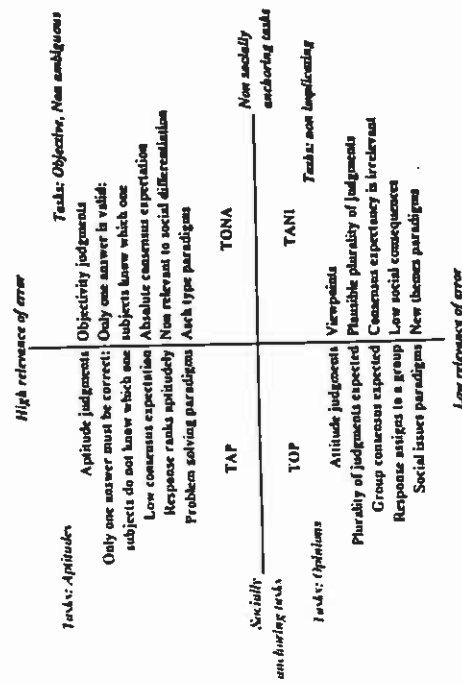


FIG. 7.1. Task dimensions in the conflict elaboration in function of relevance of error and social anchoring.

**Task: Objective, Nonambiguous (TONA).** TONA are nonanchoring tasks where relevance of error is high. The prototypical study on social influence using this type of task is the well-known conformity paradigm used by Asch (1956).

In TONA objectivity judgments are at stake. Subjects have the certainty that only one answer is valid, that it can be demonstrated which one it is, and that they know it exactly. They therefore expect to find a total consensus, that is, unanimity.

These tasks are not usually relevant to differentiate people socially; judgments are facts, and different judgments are not conceived as depending on social divisions. In this way, they are non socially anchoring tasks.

**Task: Aptitudes (TAP).** TAP are anchoring tasks where relevance of error is high. The problem-solving paradigms used in several studies of influence (Legrenzi, Butera, Mugny, & Pérez, 1991; Nemeth, 1986) have all the peculiarities of this type of aptitude task.

TAP put at stake aptitude judgments. In these tasks subjects start with the certainty that one answer must be correct or more valid than others; they know that mistakes can be determined objectively, although they do not know exactly which answer is correct and which is not. Subjects can feel the necessity of reaching a consensus, but the absence of agreement among different people does not break any previous expectancy of consensus: Divergence is the most plausible, socially and cognitively, logic. Subjects know that there is a right answer (or at least one better than others) and the first concern would be how to discover it.

In this type of task, social influence is also studied in situations representing an aptitude test (Festinger, 1954), an evaluation of their own abilities. In this manner these are tasks normally used to rank people in terms of their differential aptitudes and are, therefore, socially anchoring tasks.

**Task: Opinions (TOP).** TOP are anchoring tasks where relevance of error is low. Experiments using social issues (attitudes, values, etc.) are typical of TOP.

They are tasks in which there is no objective way to determine what is right or wrong. The preconception does not imply that there is one right answer. On the contrary, a plurality of differentiated positions is expected and even considered as necessary.

In this type of task a direct correspondence is expected between different opinions and relevant social differentiations (Doise, 1978; Rokeach, Smith, & Evans, 1966). To each group or social category would correspond specific opinions, and vice versa, a specific opinion assigns people to a determined group or social category. In TOP opinions are, therefore, socially anchoring.

**Task: Nonimplicating (TANI).** TANI are nonanchoring tasks where relevance of error is low. They refer to viewpoints and share the same characteristics as the TOP, with an important exception: They refer to tasks where opinions are not

indicators of specific social positions. In this way, whereas in the TOP a given opinion reveals a social orientation, in the TANI it only expresses a personal point of view among the plurality of viewpoints, and it generally refers to questions nearly new for the targets, and/or that are of very low social relevance for them. People may feel compelled to be asked for their personal views or preferences, without any social consequence for the self. These judgments have no social anchoring, and error is not relevant. Anyone can express a priori whichever opinion or preference he or she wishes, independent from particular social memberships and correctness. In the TANI, people would have no special expectation to reach or not reach a consensus. The difference in answers from other people is not conflictual in itself. In this way they are socially nonimplicating tasks.

For each task we can summarize the main factors that will shape the conflict elaboration elicited by a divergence of responses in the social influence encounter:

1. In TONA, conflict elaboration will be oriented by the challenging of two preconceptions: Why unanimity is not achieved, and why the source is wrong.
2. In TAP, conflict elaboration will be shaped by people concerned with trying to increase the correctness of their judgments and/or to give the best self-image of their abilities.
3. In TOP, conflict elaboration is shaped by how to the maintain categorical differentiation logic, that is, ingroup agreement and outgroup disagreement, and/or avoidance of negative attributes to the self in the case of a threatening identification.
4. In TANI, because they are not socially implicating tasks, there is no previous fixed norm to give a meaning to divergence.

### Type of Sources and Relevant Dimensions

Studies of social influence and persuasion (for a review, see Allen, 1975; Moscovici, 1985; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) have repeatedly shown that a source can obtain an influence not only by what it says but primarily by what it represents socially, that is, who it is and what its characteristics are. However, few social influence theories have developed a systematic conceptualization of the characteristics of the source, except social impact theory/model (cf. Latané & Wolf, 1981, see also Vol. I; Tanford & Penrod, 1984). In this respect CET considers that source characteristics (mainly number, social identity, and competence) are to be understood in terms of their relevance to the specific socio-epistemic preconceptions of a given type of task. Thus, depending on the type of task, one characteristic or another will be relevant for conflict elaboration:

1. We have seen that in TONA what matters is principally the existence or absence of unanimity. Due to this absolute unanimity expectancy, anyone who

breaks it will always produce a conflict. The most important characteristic of the source is not here whether it is or is not an expert who breaks it, nor whether it is someone who belongs to an ingroup or an outgroup. The important point is whether there is someone (1, 2, 3, or more subjects) breaking unanimity. In this type of task the main key is, then, the number of people who compose the source.

2. In TAP the source's *competence* would be of the most importance. Subject would above all try to formulate the most suitable judgments. In consequence, they can try to rely on the indications the source offers due to the credibility of its message (Hass, 1981).

3. With TOP the most relevant characteristic of the source will refer to its *social identity*; its numerical character and even its credibility being of secondary importance. The most important thing is if the source belongs to or does not belong to the same group or social category as the subjects. The point of reference of opinions is located in the entanglement of the membership and reference groups.

4. Finally, in TANI the source characteristics may orient the processing of the message (cf. Eagly & Chaiken, 1983; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) depending on whether or not they are socially shared credibility heuristics.

Of course, taking into consideration one source dimension more than another for a given type of task does not mean that other dimensions are not of some relevance for other cases. An important postulate of CET is, however, that for specific tasks certain source's attributes are more relevant than others. The point here is that other dimensions can also be important, but in the way they incide on these attributes, in particular through the inferences they can induce in respect to the most relevant dimension.

### Conflict Elaboration

In order for the influence produced by a given source to be studied, targets are usually confronted with a divergent response. The amplitude and direction of this divergence help define the amount of the potential influence. Let us consider now the meanings of a divergence (recognized as such by the target) as a function of the type of task and the type of source.

In the case of TONA the *basic conflict* is of a *socio-epistemic* kind: The source's answers do not coincide with what subjects see or know, or expect to see or know. But the conflict will be elaborated also at the level of the social relation with the source. However, it will take a different meaning depending on the majority or the minority status of the source.

A majority source would activate the fear of ridicule, deviation, disapproval, or rejection (Levine, 1989). This can be defined by the notion of *relational conflict*. In fact, besides its basic epistemic nature (the priority remains to be correct),

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the conflict takes on a complementary relational character. Subjects have to avoid keeping a deviate judgment and may give importance to the restoration of the manifest consensus (Moscovici & Personnaz, 1980).

On the other hand, a minority source will not induce such a relational conflict. First, subjects will not experience a relational pressure as intense as that from the majority, and this pressure is not strong enough to produce a manifest compliance. The target would be especially interpellated because of the lack of total uniformity that questions the basic ground of their preconception, for in TONA unanimity is constitutive of the object. The conflict would not be relational but *epistemic* in nature.

The conflict experienced in TAP is of a competence nature. The divergent point of view defended by a given source may duplicate the *uncertainty* that subjects already feel themselves in approaching the task in isolation.

Confronting highly competent sources, there would be a tendency for subjects to converge. They would hardly question the content of the answer given by the source because their social characteristics suffice as criteria of validity. Conflict is nearly nonexistent, because the source answer is supposed to be a useful contribution for the subjects, like a prosthesis with which they can cope with the task and solve their inaptitude.

When opposed to a source with less competence, targets feel a double fear of invalidity (Kruglanski, 1989): They might make the mistake of adopting an answer with few social assurances, or of settling aside an answer without previously invalidating it, that is, without having been fully convinced socio-cognitively of its inadequacy, in case it might prove to be more correct than their own answer. We can say that it is a *conflict between incompetences*: Those of the source and those of the target.

In TOP also, the conflicts created by a source supporting a divergent judgment take on different meanings, depending now on its ingroup or outgroup category membership. These conflicts of an identity nature can take different forms:

1. When subjects are expecting an agreement, established in an ingroup, and that agreement is not reached, we can talk about a *normative conflict*.
2. When identification with extreme members or deviants from the ingroup imply negative connotations, all proximity with them means the self-attribution of characteristics that threaten the positive self-image (Mugny, Kaiser, & Papanamou, 1983). In this case we can talk of an *identification conflict*. The elements of this identification conflict are, on one hand, the search for a positive social image, and on the other hand, the pressure to maintain the cohesion (Hogg, 1992; see also chapter 9 of this volume) or even the existence of the ingroup.

If the source endorses a divergent point of view and has an outgroup identity, the conflict becomes an *intergroup conflict*. Because the source is an outgroup, subjects could reject it, as a mere effect of categorization. We still have to see

what kind of structuring socio-cognitive activities should be developed with this type of conflict for the outgroup to obtain some influence, in spite of this first resistance against it.

Notice already the possible existence of another particular conflict whose importance is dealt with later: In some circumstances, overt discrimination of outgroup and minority sources qualified as "double minorities" (Maass & Clark, 1984) can lead to a *cognitive-cultural conflict*, as long as it is an outgroup minority "protected" by a *Zelgeist* that hints negatively its discrimination. It is a cognitive conflict because the mere socio-cognitive functioning of categorization would lead subjects to differentiate themselves from the outgroup; it is a cultural conflict because a set of values of justice and social equality accepted in most societies reprimates the open explicitation of such minority discrimination.

It must be noted that the absence of judgment divergence can also be conflictual, concretely when targets are expecting a difference that does not appear, as in the case of an intergroup setting when a source categorized as outgroup defends, in spite of this, the same point of view as the target. In such a case, the *identity conflict* stems from a contradiction between a similarity of answers and a relevant social differentiation (Lemaine, Lasch, & Ricateau, 1971-1972), and leads to dissimulation (cf. Lemaine, 1975).

In terms of CET we think that the TANI are marked by *avoidance of conflict* (cf. Mugny et al., 1991): One viewpoint or another is a priori without social significance.

#### Conflict Resolution: Manifest and Latent Influences

Numerous studies on social influence have demonstrated that conflict resolution is to be examined at two levels: The manifest level and the latent level (cf. Moscovici, 1980; Moscovici, Mucchi-Falina, & Maass, 1994; Moscovici & Mugny, 1987; Moscovici, Mugny, & Van Avermaet, 1985; Moscovici & Personnaz, 1980; Mugny & Pérez, 1991; Nemeth, 1986). The main reason for doing this is that, according to the nature of conflict, the manifest answer does not necessarily end up with the conflict created by a given source. In some cases the manifest answer can even induce a new conflict.

A main principle of CET is that virtually any cognitive conflict is also primarily a social conflict. This social conflict is resolved at the level of the (even if only symbolic) social relationship with the source, whereas the cognitive conflict is resolved in the processing of the source's answer and in object examination. Another basic principle of CET is that when the social conflict is intense, no specific consequence of the cognitive conflict will appear before the social conflict is resolved in one way or another.

But these are only general tendencies, and we see now their fluctuations according to the type of task and the type of source. Let us consider, then, the conflict resolution at the manifest level (public, immediate, and direct influence)

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and at the latent level (private, delayed, or indirect influence; Mugny & Pérez, 1991) that would most probably happen in each task with each source.

##### Conflict Resolution in TONA

**The Majority.** In TONA (see Table 7.1), numerical majority sources produce in subjects a perplexity and a relational conflict that absorbs all of their attention. This conflict is usually resolved by partially showing compliance (Kelman, 1958), that is, only manifest consensus restoration. The main socio-cognitive activity is looking for a straight conflict reduction.

Compliance may have a positive connotation if subjects interpret it as a successful ingratiation tactic (Jones & Jones, 1964). In this case no latent change should occur, and the most probable result is that the latent (e.g., private) judgments will be the same as those given before the influence situation. Personnaz (1975-1976, 1979) used the notion of clandestinity to explain this way of keeping at a "secondary" level the personal judgments during the period of influence itself in order to make the resolution of the social conflict possible.

Now, compliance would have negative connotations when subjects understand it as a submission to a social pressure of the majority. Because manifest reactance behaviors (Brehm, 1966) are difficult or psychologically costly (Hellman, 1976), subjects could experience here a double threat for their personal integrity: that of yielding to the other and that of yielding in the face of the perceptive evidence. It can be said that in this case subjects will try to recover their autonomy and enhance their self-image, even if this is possible only at a latent level free from majority pressures.

TABLE 7.1  
Conflict Elaboration and Social Influences in Objective Nonambiguous Tasks (TONA)

	Majority	Minority
Conflict:	Relational Conflict	Epistemic Conflict
Manifest Elaboration:	Consensus Restoration Threat of Integrity	Independence Object Unicity
Latent Elaboration:	Compliance Autonomy Recovering	Self-Conformity Uniformization
Main Socio-Cognitive Activity:	Straight Conflict Resolution	Objectivation
Other Factors Effect:	Increases Compliance	Any factor that increases the relational pressure: Decreases Uniformization

Specific hypotheses about latent majority influence deriving from CET have been tested using situations close to the Asch (1956) paradigm, where the response is as evident as the fact that the source is wrong. Despite the objective character of the answer, the extent of the influence observed in this type of paradigm is well known. What is the reason? Classically, the effect has been interpreted in terms of informational and normative dependence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). The hypothesis of CET is that the socio-epistemic nature of the conflict is responsible for this. It has then been demonstrated that dynamics of influence appear because targets expect unanimity and disappear when this expectation is challenged (Butera, Huguët, Mugny, & Pérez, 1994).

Now, how do we explain why one observes a compliance effect so frequently? CET predicts that it is essentially due to the fact that this basic conflict is deviated from its origins and takes, when confronted with a majority source, a salient relational significance masking the epistemic conflict. It follows that if an ad hoc manipulation succeeds in suppressing the relational or informational pressure (i.e., in eliminating dependence), then latent effects should be observed, because unanimity expectations are not met (Butera et al., 1994; Mugny, 1984). This constitutes a core demonstration in the Brandstätter et al. (1991) experiment. The corollary has also been illustrated: Once some relational dependence is reintroduced, latent effects disappear and manifest influence is the only remainder (Pérez, Mugny, Butera, Kaiser, & Roux, 1991).

**The Minority.** In TONA an effect of self-conformity usually appears in confrontation with a minority. With the manifest maintenance of independence, the social conflict is resolved in a comfortable way for the personal identity of the subjects. However, the problem of uniformity of the judgments remains unsolved, because objectivity requires these to be totally consensual (i.e., unanimous) in order to be fully objective. Subjects find themselves in a double impossibility. They are not able to change the source, and they cannot change themselves by adopting the judgment from the source at a manifest level because the source is a minority. Given the epistemic conflict that any (even numerically weak) divergence creates in a TONA, subjects would be led to undertake an objectivation activity; that is, reconstructing in some way the properties of the object, in order to maintain its uniformity, now anchored in the point of view of the minority source. This can explain why when faced with TONA a minority, despite the lack of manifest influence, can modify the latent responses of the targets (Brandstätter et al., 1991; Moscovici & Personnaz, 1980, 1986, 1991; Personnaz, 1981). The change rests here on a representational dynamic that comes from the epistemo-ideologic (Mugny & Doise, 1979) necessity of the unity of the object.

In TONA the effect of the other dimensions that can differentiate the sources is easy to predict: All factors that increase the relational pressure or facilitate identification with the minority will shift the conflict resolution to a more manifest level and inhibit latent change (Mugny, Butera, Pérez, & Huguët, 1993).

### Conflict Resolution in TAP

In TAP (see Table 7.2) a *high-competence source* would generally yield an extensive manifest influence. Based on the uncertainty and inability of the targets, the conflict with competent or expert sources would be resolved by way of informational dependence (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Festinger, 1950). Subjects would take for granted that the opposed point of view has more validity than their own and would adopt or imitate it directly, thus resolving both the uncertainty and the social conflict (Butera, Mugny, Legrenzi, & Pérez, 1996). Subjects can eventually look for further confirmation on the latent level. Whether or not it is generalized to related tasks will depend on the intensity of convergent thinking (Nemeth, 1986).

Let us now look at the case of *low-competence sources* in TAP. The conflict they introduce leads to the most various constructivist resolutions. In the first place, given their incompetence, they are not expected to obtain a notable manifest influence, avoidance or distantiation instead. However, subjects remain uncertain—they still do not know the right answer—and are therefore in a conflict between incompetencies—the source's, and their own. Due to the fear of invalidity (Kruglanski, 1989), and according to a series of socio-cognitive activities implicated in the process of validation, this conflict between incompetencies can induce an important indirect influence on task solving.

First, we must make a distinction between the validity of a response and the validation process. The validity of a response here refers to the social prestige associated with a response due to the prestige of the source itself. The validation

TABLE 7.2  
Conflict Elaboration and Social Influences in Aptitude Tasks (TAP)

	High Competence	Low Competence
Conflict:	Nearly Nonexistent	Conflict Between Incompetencies
Manifest Elaboration:	Informational Dependence Confirmation	Social Invalidation Fear of Invalidity
Latent Elaboration:		
Manifest Influence:	Imitation Generalization	Distantiation Task Solving
Latent Influence:		
Main Socio-Cognitive Activity:	Convergent Thinking	Validation, Divergent Thinking, Decentration
Other Factors Effect:	Majority or Ingroup Accentuate Convergent Thinking	Source Independence Activates Validation Process



process, as Moscovici and Personnaz (1980) understood it, refers to the socio-cognitive operations that subjects undertake to examine the adequacy of what the source says concerning the object properties. Taking into consideration this difference, it can be hypothesized that the expert sources would obtain their influence because their expertise confers validity to their answer. On the contrary, a source without greater expertise than the targets themselves would obtain influence through the validation process.

Three complementary socio-cognitive activities would intervene in this validation process that makes the indirect influence of the low-credibility sources possible:

1. First is the still intriguing observation by Moscovici and Personnaz (1980). They supported that "as a result of trying to see or understand what the minority saw or understood, the majority begins to see and understand as the minority would" (p. 272).
2. The second type of activity is divergent thinking. It is characterized (Neimeth, 1986) by the fact that subjects do more than just convince themselves of the correctness of the minority point of views: "Those exposed to minority views are stimulated to attend to more aspects of the situation, they think in more divergent ways, and they are more likely to detect novel solutions or come to new decisions. . . . There are creative contributions made by dissenting minority, even when it is wrong. Its value lies not so much in the correctness of its position but rather in the attention and thought process it induces" (p. 3). In respect to a minority subjects can concentrate on the task and activate a whole set of abilities, without being "paralyzed" by the dominant solution, as usually occurs when the source is seen as highly competent or when it is seen as a majority.
3. Decentration is another possible socio-cognitive activity that intervenes in the validation process (Huguet, Mugny, & Pérez, 1991-1992). It is related to the ambiguous property of the task and to the source's independence. It lies in the idea that subjects understand that from another perspective different characteristics of the objects might be perceived that also have some probability of being right (Huguet et al., 1991-1992).

From all this, two predictions can be concluded. First, when TAP refer to tasks implicating abilities in creativity, originality, or personal autonomy, the full adoption of the source's response challenges original and autonomous characteristics of the self. High-power, -status, or -number-size sources will probably lose their manifest influence, and certainly their latent influence. In such a case, a less compelling source (i.e., of low expertise, number, or power) will obtain more influence (Crano, 1992). Second, any variable that emphasizes the independent behavior of the source (e.g., belonging to another group) adds properties likely to activate the validation process.

A critical test of these various processes has been the demonstration that in an aptitude task a low-competent source (i.e., a minority) induces a constructiv-

tic activity (Butera & Mugny, 1992; Legrenzi et al., 1991) when targets have a task representational allowing for multiple solutions, whereas limitation of a more credible source (i.e., a majority) model appears when subjects expect that a single correct answer is allowed (Butera, Legrenzi, & Mugny, 1993; Butera et al., 1996). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that this constructivistic activity is effectively due to simultaneous doubt concerning self-validity and source's validity, that is, to a conflict between incompetences (Butera & Mugny, 1995).

### Conflict Resolution in TOP

Let us look at the variety of activities induced by the categorization of the source in the TOP, where the influence implications are of an identity nature (see Table 7.3).

When the source is an ingroup, in terms of CET three types of possible activities can be seen: the self-categorization process, the dynamic of identification, and the indissociation process.

First, an ingroup source can give rise to an intensification of the self-categorization process described by Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, and Wetherell (1987). The consequence will be an intensification of conformity to the position of the ingroup source and the self-attribution of the response considered as definitional

TABLE 7.3  
Conflict Elaboration and Social Influences in Opinion Tasks (TOP)

	Ingroup	Outgroup
Conflict:	Normative Conflict Identification Conflict	Intergroup Conflict Cognitive-Cultural Conflict
Manifest Elaboration: Latent Elaboration:	Normative Dependence Ingroup Homogeneity	Social Differentiation Shame of Discrimination
Manifest Influence:	Conformity Disimitation No Change	Discrimination Conversion
Latent Influence:	Internalization	
Main Socio-Cognitive Activity:	Self-Categorization Identification Indissociation Paralysis	Categorization Disociation
Other Faction Effect:	Majority or Competence Accentuate These Dynamics	Minority or Denial Accentuate Disociation

of the ingroup identity (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Maass, Clark, & Haberkorn, 1982; Martin, 1988; Mugny & Papastamou, 1982; Volpato, Maass, & Mucchi-Faina, 1990). A process of this type implies normative dependence on the source. Furthermore, when the indirect dimension constitutes a relevant dimension and makes salient the identification with its own category, the manifest influence will be interlarded (cf. Mackie, 1987; Mackie, Worth, & Asuncion, 1990; Turner, 1991; Wilder, 1990). In fact the influence of ingroup source will be greater when that source polarizes the ingroup position (cf. Turner et al., 1987). In this case, influence would be the way to maintain the ingroup homogenization (Turner, 1991).

Now, it is not excluded that an ingroup source produces what can be considered a socio-cognitive paralysis (Sanchez-Mazas, Pérez, Navarro, Mugny, & Jovanovic, 1993). This refers to the resolution of the cognitive conflict by giving the response expected to be given by the ingroup. In this way subjects would not feel the need to elaborate it more at a personalized level, because ingroup homogeneity is reestablished through manifest conformity. This process results in a manifest compliance with the prototypical norm of the ingroup but without any more elaborated nor deeper changes (Pérez, Mugny, & Navarro, 1991).

In fact, it is when the targets are "obliged" to go against their group norm that they can engage in a deeper change, precisely because they do not overtly conform to it. Contrary to self-categorization ideas, deeper changes are here not the result of mere self-categorization, but the consequence of the elaboration of the conflict in an ingroup context, as has been shown in studies bearing on attitudes concerning foreigners (Sanchez-Mazas et al., 1993).

However it is not evident that any divergence felt within the ingroup will be perceived as more prototypical, orienting in its direction the self-categorization process and social influence. In many cases the positions at the margins of the ingroup can be seen as intradeviates and would induce an identification conflict.

So when subjects' activity is essentially focused on the creation of divisions (or subtyping) within their own membership category (Pérez & Mugny, 1985), dissimulation (Lemalne, 1975) can absorb their whole socio-cognitive activity and prevent indirect as well as direct influence. This is a typical case of Indissociation (cf. Mugny, Ibáñez, Elejabarrieta, Iniguez, & Pérez, 1986; Papastamou, Mugny, & Pérez, 1991-1992; Pérez & Mugny, 1987).

The ingroup can obtain more latent than manifest influence when both an intense process of self-categorization and an identification conflict are present. In this case, the target is confronted with the fact that, on one hand, the source's extreme position may be more prototypical of its own category (Mugny & Pérez, 1985), and on the other hand, these extreme positions have negative connotations that the target is not inclined to endorse overtly. This latent influence depends here on the conflict due to the loss of ingroup homogeneity and cohesion.

What happens in TOP when the source is categorized as an outgroup? Two types of activities can produce an open discrimination together with a latent change (i.e., the so-called conversion effect).

With regard to the outgroup, at the manifest level subjects simply could resolve the conflict by maintaining or accentuating social differentiation between groups (cf. Tajfel, 1978). That is, by adopting a divergent point of view they can even increase the discrimination of the outgroup source beyond the discrimination it would receive by the mere fact of being categorized as an outgroup. This outgroup discrimination can, however, bear one or several paradoxical effects.

First, there could exist a shame of discrimination. It is observed nowadays that in many issues discrimination (at least manifest discrimination) is a socially censured behavior. There is a predominant Zeitgeist that connotes negatively any social discrimination, when this is not sufficiently "justified" (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1981). Hence, the resolution on the public level of the conflict created by an outgroup can lead to another cognitive-cultural conflict that can only be resolved at the most latent level.

In several studies, a distinction has been made between manifest racism (subject to current cultural censorship) and latent racism, that is the pernicious form it can take when prevented from overt expression. Several studies address the discrimination of an outgroup minority, in particular anti-Gypsy racism (cf. Pérez, Falomir, Bagueña, & Mugny, 1993). The underlying logic, as in the case of normative conflicts, is that latent racism can only be eradicated by leading individuals to express—even against their own will—a manifest attitude at least tendentially racist. Latent changes can be found as a consequence of the cognitive and cultural conflict—shame of discrimination—elicited by the manifest expression of a culturally prohibited attitude. Specific to this cultural conflict are the normative constraints concerning minority outgroups protected by the cultural censorship. Evidence for this fact is the experimental demonstration that as soon as a minority is given a position of superiority (through appropriate inductions, e.g., high social status), the cultural conflict is deactivated and therefore the latent changes (Pérez, Mugny, Liavata, & Fierres, 1993).

The second socio-cognitive activity whereby an outgroup—and above all an outgroup minority—could produce a conversion effect is the process of dissociation (Pérez & Mugny, 1990). Dissociation refers to the fact that subjects process "in two times" the social and cognitive conflict created by the source. Before they can elaborate the cognitive conflict induced by the positions of the outgroup, they must have resolved the intergroup conflict. In general, at the expense of the minority positions, in particular on its organizing principle (Pérez & Mugny, 1986, 1990). It is predicted that the best conditions for the emergence of conversion are when the cognitive conflict is experienced after being dissociated from the social conflict. The paradoxical prediction here is that in case of dissociation, the more intense the conflict (e.g., because of denial; see Moscovici, Mugny, & Pérez, 1984-1985; Mugny & Pérez, 1991; Pérez, Moscovici, & Mugny, 1991; Pérez, Mugny, & Moscovici, 1986; see also Pérez, Falomir, & Mugny, 1995), the more the latent change.

## Conclusion

In spite of the considerable extension and variety of research on social influence and of the number of "local" theories, it appears possible to have a global overview that integrates the multiple processes at stake under a common dynamic notion, that is, conflict elaboration. Such a conceptualization offers the opportunity not to deny the validity of relevant theories and paradigms, and to try to take them all into account. In effect, it suggests refining the particular conditions (tasks and sources) under which the specific dynamics discovered by the various scholars in the field of social influence do intervene, without opposing them in vain controversies.

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## INFORMATION SEEKING AMONG INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS AND POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES FOR DECISION MAKING IN BUSINESS AND POLITICS

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The goal-oriented activities and decisions made by groups in business and politics very frequently involve the search for and evaluation of information. Such search and evaluation processes are not complete once provisional or even final decisions have been reached, but should instead be regarded as ongoing activities. Of considerable interest is the question of whether the search for and evaluation of decision-relevant information are carried out in an unbiased way or whether they are more likely to be "distorted." The model of the "Homo Oeconomicus" suggests, for example, that persons involved in this process very carefully search for and evaluate all information relevant to the problem before reaching a provisional or final decision. However, because persons and groups active in politics and business are subject to the same laws of human information processing as other people, the opposite may indeed be the case: Empirical research on the phenomenon of "groupthink" (Janis, 1972, 1982) and one of the most important theories of social psychology—the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957, 1964)—lead to the conclusion that people involved in a decision-making process prefer and even selectively search for specific information that will support a decision that has already been made or that the actor intends to make.