

Social Factors that Affect the Processing of Minority-Sourced Persuasive Communications

William D. Crano & Eusebio M. Alvaro

Claremont Graduate University

“God said, ‘Let Newton be,’ and all was light”

– Alexander Pope

It is commonplace for historians of science to acknowledge the near inescapable conclusion that the adoption of a scientific mindset was a fundamental ingredient in the social, political, and intellectual ascent of the West. These “Whig-centric” historic accounts, as they have been characterized, reach their apogee in the writings of Timothy Ferris, who viewed the rise of the scientific method in the West not as an effect of the Enlightenment, but as the necessary cause of social progress and the growth of freedom and human dignity that characterized this period of incredible ferment (Ferris, 2010). He contended the standard account, in which the Renaissance gave rise to the scientific revolution, which ultimately resulted in the Enlightenment was shortsighted and causally backward. Rather, pride of place belonged to the scientists and proto-scientists whose insights, which grew out of an elemental break in the ways in which the world was understood, at least in the West, made the Renaissance possible. Western democracies and the recognition of inalienable human rights did not emerge magically through an aberrant conjunction of humanistic and scientific thought; rather, science gave rise to the possibility of the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and all that followed.<sup>i</sup>

Ferris (2010) consistently emphasized the primacy of the experiment, because the logic and openness of the experiment, with its insistence on data-constrained feedback rather than

preordained authority, fostered an unyielding and unremitting reliance on objective evidence in defining truth (Crano & Brewer, 2002; Crano & Lac, 2012). The experiment's nonnegotiable and obstinate requirement of a "special" kind of knowledge unprivileged by hereditary succession, divine right, or other forms of authority was strongly resisted by the often incompetent and always self-interested leaders of societies engineered to maintain established positions of wealth and power.

The role of the experiment in the gradual evolution of society and social justice meets with an interesting ally in Donald Campbell, whose core beliefs involved a vision of a society in which social reforms and innovations were tested by experimental and quasi-experimental means (Campbell, 1969, 1973, 1981; Cook & Campbell, 1979), both to justify and to assess the effects of the sometimes large scale social interventions that appear to be part of all progressive societies, and which were obviously being enacted at the time of the "experimenting society's" publication (viz., Lyndon Johnson's Great Society programs). The results of the evaluative activities of the experimenting society were meant, ideally, to provide an ongoing rationale for the continuation or elimination of social interventions based on scientific assessments unsullied by concerns of politics or fashion (Donaldson & Crano, 2011). The vision of communities in which logic and unbiased evaluations form the bases of rational evaluation is a departure from that of the enlightened philosopher kings of Plato's *Republic*, but it provides for most denizens of contemporary society a more palatable choice of lodestar.

If the experiment is the essential precondition of enlightenment, and science the mother of all good things (liberty, fraternity, equality), then persuasion is the necessary and irreplaceable engine of human progress, the indispensable implement of human social development, for without persuasion, it is unlikely that the common person could be induced willingly to abandon

the security of the known for the unknown, to give up the comfort of blind faith for the tempered conclusions of science. Arguably then, it was through persuasive speech founded on logic, reason, and replicated empirical results that the West ascended from the dark ages. There is no doubt that social revolutions are not won by rhetoric alone – though at one point in his life, Robespierre might have begged to differ – but they may be begun and sustained by persuasive communication that carries the necessary appeal for radical change, encouraging and maintaining the new orthodoxy (Hampson, 1974).

Given the importance of persuasion as fundamental to much of what we hold dear, it is useful to understand something about the process. Questions about the meaning of persuasion, its morality and ethical justification in contemporary society would seem to belong more in the realm of the philosopher or ethicist than the psychologist, but persuasion is the central defining feature of social psychology, and so it is reasonable that we take a stab at its characterization (Crano, 2000a; Crano & Prislin, 2008). It is our position that the process of persuasion is neither good nor evil in and of itself, it is merely a tool. As such, it is not usefully judged in moral terms, though certainly the results of the persuasion process may, and should be. Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, a blatantly propagandistic film glorifying the Nazi Party at its 1934 rally in Nuremberg, served wholly immoral ends, but one can only judge as brilliant the communication processes she brought to bear in the work. The persuasive methods used in the film helped reinforce a hateful, immoral group of unadulterated thugs, but the process itself was morally neutral. The same persuasive processes could be used to encourage organ donation or to prevent illicit drug use – admirable goals, but as before, even in these circumstances the processes themselves cannot be judged as good or evil.

To attain a better grip on the persuasion process, it is important to consider its focus, namely, attitudes. Literally hundreds of definitions of attitude may be found in the psychological literature, and this is as it should be, as it reflects the centrality of the construct to the field (Campbell, 1963; McGuire, 1985). In Crano and Prislin's (2006, p. 347) terms, an attitude is "an integration of cognitions and affects experienced in relation to an object." An attitude is a complex cognitive structure, an evaluation that involves knowledge of an object and a judgment of the goodness (or badness) of the object conditioned by that knowledge. The fundamental evaluative nature of attitudes is central to this view, as it was at the beginning, when Thurstone laid out the techniques used to define them objectively (Thurstone, 1931). This view of attitude suggests that to effect change, one must alter either the knowledge associated with an attitude object, or the perceiver's views of the implications of that knowledge. Although the construct of attitude-as-evaluation appears simple, it is complex and has been the source of considerable unevenness in the literature, as it is possible to change either the knowledge or the perceived implications of the knowledge and thereby create an entirely different attitude.

Persuasion refers to the act of inducing another to adopt a belief that is different from, or in conflict with an established one. The definition requires that the proffered attitude or belief is contrary to that held by the persuasion target. This requirement distinguishes persuasion from other forms of influence. It is sensitive to the distinction drawn by some between attitude formation and attitude change (Crano & Prislin, 2006; Johnson & Eagly, 1990; Prislin & Wood, 2005), and it constrains the focus of our discussion so as to exclude considerations of conditioning, evaluative or otherwise, which are considered by many as methods of attitude formation rather than change (Cacioppo, Marshall-Goodell, Tassinary, & Petty, 1992; Walther & Langer, 2008). Further, we are primarily concerned with message-based persuasion, while

acknowledging that many other methods of changing beliefs are available to the skillful persuader. Behavior, for example, has long been seen as a strong source of attitudes (Fazio & Zanna, 1981; Festinger, 1957; Regan & Fazio, 1977), but we are focused here on contexts in which established attitudes are attacked by meaningful messages.

### **Minority Influence and Social Change**

Our focus on persuasion as the engine of enlightened thought and human progress immediately calls attention to the persuasive power, or lack thereof, of minority groups. Societies in which all members are happy and satisfied are stagnant, unlikely to change, and probably nonexistent. Societies in which the discontent of the citizenry reaches a critical mass will change, even if blood must be spilled to do so. The Arab Spring of 2011 was not a walk in the park. Any situation in which the ruling power is overthrown, peaceably or otherwise, may be considered an example of minority influence at work, even if the minority far outnumbered the ruling class, the power majority (Crano, 2012). Without minority discontent, it is difficult to envision the means by which social progress would occur. Systems in which the minority is denied a voice typically involve coercion and lack of due process. Lord Acton was correct when he stated that “The most certain test by which we judge whether a country is really free is the amount of security enjoyed by minorities.”<sup>ii</sup> It is for this reason that in all of the research in social psychology devoted to the investigation of persuasion, studies focused on minority influence are most relevant to the furtherance of a free society. Most novel ideas spring from solitary individuals -- voices in the wilderness – and from these humble origins universally-acknowledged truths sometimes emerge. The impetus for social change begins with an idea contrary to that held, and often suppressed by the majority. The existence of such a process of minority-inspired social change and the diffusion of knowledge necessary to foster it is a hallmark of a democratizing society, though the

minority's medicine often proves worse than the old majority's disease (Prislin & Christensen, 2009; Prislin, Sawicki, & Williams, 2011). It logically follows that the study of social change and social progress may be served best by understanding the processes by which minorities gain persuasive traction, and that is the goal of this work.

Serge Moscovici is primarily responsible for contemporary interest in the scientific study of minority influence. He claimed that minorities were the source of all social innovation, and in this he was in agreement with Goethe, who held that "Everything great and intelligent resides in the minority." In his studies of minority group influence, Moscovici found that minority positions could prevail, but only if the minority was consistent, persistent, and unanimous when presenting its position (Moscovici, 1985; Moscovici & Lage, 1976, 1978; Moscovici, Lage, & Naffrechoux, 1969; Moscovici & Nemeth, 1974; Moscovici & Personnaz, 1980). Although the majority always has the upper hand in the influence game and usually can force compliance if it chooses to do so, its influence often (but not always) is fleeting (Alvaro & Crano, 1997; Crano, 2001; Crano & Alvaro, 1998a). Minority influence, on the other hand, while rarely direct, often may be observed on beliefs associated with, but distinguishable from, the target or focus of its persuasive message (Pérez & Mugny, 1987). When direct minority influence is found, it usually appears only after some time has passed (Crano & Chen, 1998; Wood, Lundgren, Ouellette, Busceme, & Blackstone, 1994), or on issues on which the majority has no vested interest (Crano & Hannula-Bral, 1994). The unusual pattern of immediate but indirect influence, and delayed direct (or focal) persuasion, is almost never found in research involving majority-based influence. The theoretical models proposed in the early days of minority research to explain the curious influence patterns that had been found, but succeeded in painting only part of the picture.

### **The Leniency Contract Model**

To make sense of the curious processes involved in minority influence, Crano and Alvaro proposed a theoretical model that not only was consistent with the pattern of results found in earlier majority and minority influence studies, but also proffered predictions that anticipated the range of outcomes that might occur in studies in which various features of the minority and its actions varied (Crano & Alvaro, 1998a). The overall predictive device, the context/comparison model (CCM), integrated features of social categorization theory (Abrams, 1999; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), inter- and intra-group relations (Crano & Hemovich, 2011; Tajfel, 1978, 1979), and classic persuasion theory (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1963). It was designed to detail the circumstances in which the majority's attempts at influence would succeed and persist, succeed fleetingly, or fail entirely. It also laid out the conditions under which a minority would have an immediate direct or indirect effect, and conditions under which delayed focal effects would arise.

This chapter is an explication and extension of the leniency contract, a central component of the CCM that is concerned with minority influence. We revisit our consideration of attitudinal associative networks, extend the model in adopting this perspective, and conceptualize attitude change as a process that unfolds over time in response to multiple persuasive messages. Much as Moscovici (1985) critiqued attitude change theory and research as being the study of the majority on hapless majorities while ignoring the possibility of minority influence, a legitimate critique can be leveled at the practice of studying attitudes in isolation, and attitude change in response to a single persuasive communication. The dominant paradigm in attitude research—with very few exceptions, as may be found in the study of inoculation and resistance—has involved observation of the effects of a single treatment on change of an isolated attitude. Minority influence research

suggests the need to address multiple associated attitudes in theory and research, a suggestion that if followed could lead to important advances in understanding.

Considering indirect attitude change suggests the desirability of a broader conceptualization of the attitude change process, one that includes study of the effects of multiple messages on a focal issue, and on the attitudes related to it. The minority influence research context provides a fertile venue for serious consideration of attitude change over time, and may prove valuable in development of general and encompassing principles of attitude change. Our proposed extension of the CCM/leniency contract vis-à-vis consideration of change as a process unfolding over time and in response to multiple messages proceeds from the view of attitudes as evaluations enmeshed in a complex structural network of associated evaluations.

The CCM relies heavily on the near-axiomatic proposition that attitudes, like knowledge, are interconnected in long-term memory in associative networks (Collins & Loftus, 1975; Fazio, Sanbonmatsu, Powell, & Kardes, 1986; Fazio & Williams, 1986; Higgins, 1996; Smith, 1998) typified by nodes interlinked via associative paths (Anderson, 1983; Clore, Schwarz, & Conway, 1994; Fazio, 1986; Forgas, 2001; Greene, 1984; Smith, 1994). These paths vary in strength, which largely depends on the degree of connection between individual nodes and the importance or centrality of each node (Anderson, 1983; Smith, 1998; Wyer & Carlston, 1994; Wyer & Srull, 1989). Strength may be enhanced via frequent activation of interlinked nodes. An associative network of attitudes is engaged upon the activation of a specific node via consideration of a node-specific attitude object (Anderson, 1983). This initial activation spreads to other nodes within the network (Smith, 1998).<sup>iii</sup> While the strength of associative paths has been the subject of considerable theoretical and investigative work, the concept of node strength has been the subject of less study—especially in research on attitudes. An exception is found in the work of



Pfau and colleagues in research on resistance to persuasion (Pfau et al., 2005; Pfau et al., 2003). In their work, Pfau and associates contended that node strength was positively related to attitude durability or resistance, a feature of attitude strength (Petty & Krosnick, 1995), and that stronger nodes exerted greater influence in attitude networks, as would be expected from considering the correlates of attitude strength.

### **The Leniency Contract**

A central component of the CCM, the leniency contract, provides a useful means of conceptualizing the processes by which a minority influences the majority, and not incidentally, the ways the majority wields influence (Alvaro & Crano, 1996b, 1997; Crano, 2001, 2010; Crano & Alvaro, 1998a, 1998b; Crano & Hemovich, 2011; Crano & Seyranian, 2007, 2009).<sup>iv</sup> We begin with the common situation in which a person or group holding an opinion at odds with that of the majority advances an idea and seeks to influence the opposition. From the perspective of the majority group members, this is not an unusual occurrence. Disagreements within groups, even highly entitative groups, are commonplace (Abrams & Hogg, 1999; Guinote, 2004; Hogg, 2012), but the question that springs to the mind of the majority group member in these contexts concerns the identity of the deviant information source. Is the aberrant position promoted by a fellow group member or by an outsider (in our terms, an out-group member)? The answer has much to do with the majority group's response, but the question is more complicated than it appears.

***Who/what is a minority?*** Specifying the meaning of *minority group* is not trivial. In most empirical social laboratory research, minority group status is based on number (Seyranian, Atuel, & Crano, 2008), a convenient and easily manipulable feature. Although convenient, Seyranian and colleagues discovered that number was not the first categorization that came to mind when

people were asked to form a concept of “minority.” In their research, minorities were described first in terms power, then number, distinctiveness, social category, group context, dispositions, and being the target, rather than the instigator of actions. Integrating these findings, Crano (2012, p. 43) defined “the *typical* minority group as a collective of people who are less numerous, less powerful, and who hold beliefs that those in power consider incorrect, subversive, dangerous, or in some way contrary to everyone’s (that is, everyone who matters) best interests.”

***Out-group minorities.*** To this point, we have not considered the in-group or out-group nature of the minority group. Obviously, minorities can be either, and the difference matters (Crano & Seyranian, 2007; David & Turner, 2001). Most minority influence research has implicitly operationalized minority sources as in-group, thus rendering results most applicable to intragroup influence contexts. When minorities are considered out-group, the insights drawn from theories and research on intergroup relations become more relevant. We have attempted to take advantage of this possibility in our discussion of in-group and out-group minorities. The danger of implicitly assuming the minority is in-group, as much of the research in this field has done, is that this orientation masks strong differences that reside in the persuasive potential of the (in-group or out-group) minority. In-group minorities can prevail. Out-group minorities are not likely to do so, because unless they pose a serious threat to the in-group, they usually are dismissed out of hand, their views judged unimportant. If the out-group does pose a threat, the majority’s rejection can be severe. In most circumstances, the out-group is not capable of threatening the viability of the majority, and as such, it generally will have little, if any influence on the majority (Alvaro & Crano, 1997; Clark & Maass, 1988a, 1988b).<sup>v</sup>

***Judgmental considerations.*** In some admittedly rare circumstances, an out-group minority can persuade the majority to consider its position and accept its recommendations.

These circumstances involve issues or judgments on which members of the majority believe there is an objective solution or answer to a question that is at issue, and that the minority has provided that solution. In these cases, the opinion of the minority can prevail. Laughlin and Ellis (1986, p. 177) referred such issues or tasks as *intellective*, “problems or decisions for which there exists a demonstrably correct answer” (see also Laughlin, 1988). In contexts involving a problem with a “demonstrably correct answer,” the in-group or out-group status of the minority will not affect the majority’s acceptance of the proffered answer, *assuming* the majority does not recast the problem or decision as involving subjective preferences rather than objective reality. This would not seem a high bar, but considerable research has shown that recasting an obviously objective issue as subjective is not difficult (Crano & Hannula-Bral, 1994; Gorenflo & Crano, 1989), so the out-group’s job may be considerably harder than it might appear at first glance.

The upshot of this integration of in-group/out-group minority status with the subjective or objective nature of the issue is that out-group minorities can have influence, but often do not. The out-group can move the majority, but this is likely only when the issue obviously admits to an undeniable solution, which the majority to that point had been unable to find. The “eureka” effect supplies a useful example of such context: if a minority proposes a solution to a vexing problem with which the majority has struggled, and the minority’s solution is obviously right, the in- or out-group status of the source of the solution is of little relevance. Its ideas will be accepted. Circumstances in which the out-group can prevail are rare, however, and its influence can be upended by the majority’s recasting the issue as involving subjective preference, or as working against the vested interests of the group. In those situations, the out-group’s persuasive power is lost. Research that has neglected the subjective or objective nature of the persuasion

context, or the in-group or out-group nature of the minority probably is partly responsible for the sometimes uneven and confusing results found in the literature on minority group influence.

*The in-group minority's tests.* In-group minorities have a considerably easier time influencing the majority, but this is not to say that their road is simple, even though they are accepted by the majority as part of the larger collective. If the in-group minority is to move the majority to its position, it must “pass” a series of tests, the first of which – is the minority in- or out-group? – has been considered. The second test has to do with the implications of the minority’s message for the majority group’s viability or longevity. If the minority’s position will result in the decline or demise of the group, the majority will reject it. Usually, in-group minorities advocating a position that threatens the core group identity will elicit strong defense motivation from in-group majority members—attitudes at the core of a group’s identity are strong (Petty & Krosnick, 1995), and well-embedded in an attitudinal network. As such, the in-group majority influence targets will be unyielding and will forcefully reject the advocated position—along with those advocating the position. In effect, this relegates an ostensible in-group minority to out-group status subject to devaluation the considerable constraints imposed on out-group members (Marques & Yzerbyt, 1988; Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988; Meindl & Lerner, 1984). Majority group members enjoy considerable benefits as a consequence of their position and are unlikely to readily accept positions that require them to surrender their perquisites.

There remain tests to pass even after the minority has persuaded the majority that its position is not so self-interested that its acceptance threatens the group’s existence, an especially difficult task in contexts involving “double minorities,” groups whose positions and relevant socio-demographic characteristics differ from the majority’s (Maass, Clark, & Haberkorn, 1982).

The next test has to do with the quality of the minority's message. Research by Martin and Hewstone suggests that message quality is an important determinant of a minority's success or failure, because relevant in-group minority communications are likely to be highly scrutinized, or elaborated (Martin & Hewstone, 2001, 2008; Martin, Hewstone, & Martin, 2007; Martin, Martin, Smith, & Hewstone, 2007). If a minority passes all the tests to this point, attracting the attention of the majority, but fails to deliver a strong and persuasive message, it is unlikely to prevail. The advocated position conveyed in a weak message will not prove persuasive under conditions of high elaboration, and the minority's influence will be forfeit (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Despite a lively controversy the mid-1980s regarding the contribution and originality of the elaboration likelihood model (ELM) (Petty, Cacioppo, Kasmer, & Haugtvedt, 1987; Petty, Kasmer, Haugtvedt, & Cacioppo, 1987; Petty, Wegener, Fabrigar, Priester, & Cacioppo, 1993; Stiff & Boster, 1987) and the need for a more developed theory of message strength, none has yet evolved. However, empirically based methods of creating messages varying in persuasive strength have been used since the ELM's inception, and these could be used to determine the power of a minority's appeals.

The leniency model requires strong messages if the minority is to make a dent in the majority's armor, but even with strong messages, the likelihood of finding a direct association between the minority's appeal and the majority's response is minimal, unless the situation involves issues on which the majority has not developed a firm position, which typically involve issues of norm or attitude formation rather than attitude change (Crano & Hannula-Bral, 1994; Johnson & Eagly, 1990). In these circumstances, the minority can have an immediate and direct impact, but it is important to understand that the issue must be one on which the majority has no

position, and does not see its interests at risk. In almost all other cases, the majority will not succumb directly to the persuasive appeals of the minority.

### **Attitude Change**

What, then, of the prototypical persuasion scenario in which an established belief is targeted for change? The leniency model fosters the prediction that the most likely immediate outcome of a persuasive minority group that has passed all of the tests is an accommodation by the majority on an issue (or issues) related, but not identical to the focal issue. For example, earlier research showed that an opinion minority that argued for a liberalization of abortion laws apparently failed to persuade a staunchly pro-life audience; however, the audience was significantly more amenable to contraception than were those of a group that had heard the identical pro-abortion message attributed to either an out-group minority or the majority (Pérez & Mugny, 1987), despite the minority's message never having mentioned contraception. This result was replicated and extended by Alvaro and Crano (1997) and Crano and Chen (1998). In the earlier study, Alvaro and Crano (1997) showed the *apparent* or *perceived* relatedness of the issues was not necessary to observe this seeming cross-over of influence effect. They demonstrated that a strong in-group minority message arguing against allowing gay people to serve in the US military, a position strongly opposed by the subject sample, had very little effect. However, as predicted, it significantly affected subjects' attitudes toward gun control, an issue that had been established in preliminary research as strongly associated with the focal issue. The impressive feature of this result is that participants themselves did not realize that the two attitude objects were linked in their attitudinal associative networks despite strong empirical evidence that this was in fact the case. Reversing the focal and indirect issues in a follow-on study produced results fully in accord with the earlier findings.

Crano and Chen (1998) replicated and extended these results. Using different attitude objects, their research showed indirect majority attitude change in response to an in-group minority's persuasive message. Focal change was notably absent. However, when revisited two weeks later, the investigators found that the research participants whose indirect attitudes had changed the most showed significant delayed change on the focal issue, even though the issue was not reinstated in the delayed measurement session. This result suggests that the delayed focal change found in many earlier studies (Wood et al., 1994) might have been associated with the magnitude of immediate indirect attitude change.

The leniency interpretation of these studies, and of others showing an immediate, but indirect change in response to a minority's persuasive message, sometimes followed by a delayed focal change, holds that majority group members resist being identified with the position espoused by the minority, because to do so puts them at the same risk as the minority – of becoming a target of a potentially dangerous majority reaction. It is a mistake to interpret majority group members' reluctance to accept the minority's message because acceptance would suggest identification with the minority. As in-group members, the minority faction and the larger majority share a common identity. The majority group members *are* identified with the in-group minority.

The indirect changes often found in these contexts occur because the majority, to maintain group entitativity, will not take strong measures against the deviant minority that has passed all the earlier tests. Majority group members will elaborate the minority's message without strong counterargumentation or derogation, but the price to be paid for this apparently open-minded response is the implicit understanding that no changes will ensue. The minority is allowed to state its case, the majority listens and elaborates, but stasis prevails. However, the

open-minded elaboration of a strong counterattitudinal message is bound to have an effect, and this effect is manifest in a change in related attitudes in the associative network. These changes ultimately unbalance the network and may result in focal change if the imbalance is sufficient. This accommodation requires time, and this is why focal change, when it occurs in response to minority influence, almost always is delayed.<sup>vi</sup>

### **Considerations of Multiple Messages and Change over Time**

Crano and Chen's (1998) results provided some insights into the nature of the delayed change effect often reported in response to minority influence (Alvaro & Crano, 1996a; Crano, 2000b; David & Turner, 1996, 1999; Gardikiotis, 2011; Mugny & Pérez, 1988; Wood et al., 1994). The time now is right to consider more deeply the impact of initial attitude change on subsequent outcomes. Such consideration should involve the view of change as a process that unfolds over time, likely subject to multiple messages advocating multiple (complementary) positions. Besides the potential for new discoveries inherent in this orientation, it comports with the reality of social change initiated by minority social actors and movements. Moreover, the examination of minority influence over time has the potential to revitalize minority influence research by taking a somewhat ironic step back via consideration of factors that served as the impetus for this research in the first place (Moscovici, 1985; Moscovici & Nemeth, 1974).

New social movements advance novel ideas. Over time, these ideas can become consensual and widely shared. What does theory and research in minority influence have to say about minority influence over time and via the use of multiple messages? Considerations of decay or persistence of an initial change as well as of the impact of multiple messages are logical starting points. The former issue has garnered some serious, albeit sporadic, attention since the 1980s; the latter has seen more recent and increasing interest in the minority influence literature



(Martin & Hewstone, 2008; Martin, Hewstone, & Martin, 2003; Martin, Hewstone, & Martin, 2008; Tormala, DeSensi, & Petty, 2007). Both issues benefit by the view of attitudes as objects situated in an associate network, as well as serious, and related, consideration of the roles of both direct and indirect attitudes in the face of multiple messages advocating pro- or counter-attitudinal positions. Our examination of multiple message effects is restricted to experimental contexts wherein participants do not interact with each other or with confederates. While there is a considerable body of research by Nemeth and Prislin, for example, involving interpersonal interaction and confederates serving as message sources, this work is largely concerned with minority influence within a single interaction—albeit an extended one with potentially multiple messages being exchanged (Nemeth, 1986; Nemeth & Kwan, 1985, 1987; Prislin & Christensen, 2002, 2009; Prislin, Levine, & Christensen, 2006; Prislin et al., 2011). We are concerned chiefly with the manner by which established minority groups elicit mass social change over time, and this preoccupation dictates a more narrow focus on discrete messages delivered sequentially over distributed influence targets.

A CCM-based view of the impact of multiple messages over time in the context of minority influence benefits from the examination of research conducted to examine attitude stability and resistance following minority advocacy. The experimental work of Martin and colleagues (Martin & Hewstone, 2001; Martin et al., 2008) and that of Tormala and his co-investigators (Tormala et al., 2007) recognize the value of the resistance to change paradigm for investigating minority influence. Given the CCM's reliance on an associative network view of attitudes, Pfau and colleagues' work on inoculation to persuasion (Ivanov, Pfau, & Parker, 2009a, 2009b; Pfau et al., 2005; Pfau et al., 2003); while not conducted in a minority influence

context, sheds light on how attitude structure may influence responses to multiple persuasive communications over time.

### **Overcoming Resistance**

Our view of complex associative attitude structures consisting of multiple interconnected attitudes accounts for attitude certainty and articulates with recent research on resistance to persuasion (Tormala et al., 2007). We believe instability or uncertainty is introduced into the attitudinal network as a result of indirect attitude changes arising in response to in-group minority influence. Inconsistencies among associated beliefs are sources of discomfort and uncertainty, and the stronger the associations among links in the network, the greater the uncertainty generated in response to indirect attitude change. More than a half-century's research has convinced most of us that cognitive or attitudinal uncertainty is a state that most prefer to avoid or resolve (Festinger, 1957), so it stands to reason that conflicting attitudes linked in tight associative networks would prove an ideal matrix for uncertainty. Attitudes are particularly vulnerable to change when doubts are cast on certainties (Crano, Gorenflo, & Shackelford, 1988; Crano & Sivacek, 1984). When an attitude linked with others in an associative network is changed (as occurs in minority-inspired indirect attitude change), other beliefs with which the attitude is linked become more tentative, and this uncertainty may render the belief unstable and susceptible to change. If the minority's message is later recalled in this context of attitudinal uncertainty, it is likely to have a strong effect, especially if the communication source is dissociated from its message (Kelman & Hovland, 1953).

In this sense, "uncertainty" may be seen as an operationalization of imbalance in the attitudinal network. Taking a positive frame, uncertainty also may be an early signal of openness to seeing an issue in a different light—perhaps a precursor to Nemeth's "divergent thinking." We

have held that indirect change engenders a destabilizing pressure that may rearrange inter-attitudinal relationships; uncertainty may be one manifestation of such pressure, as well as a precursor to subsequent delayed change on the focal attitude.

A view of uncertainty from the vantage point of an associative network orientation also may facilitate understanding of change, by encouraging consideration of the strength of individual nodes (attitudes), rather than the links between these nodes. Strong links should facilitate indirect and systemic change but, as Pfau and associates (2005) suggested, the strength of the individual node also deserves attention. Uncertainty has long been a proxy for attitude strength, with high certainty equated to high strength, so it is logical to assume that introducing uncertainty into a node would result in a “weakened” node (or attitude) that is more open to modification (change, realignment of links with other nodes, etc.). Perhaps it is by introducing increasingly greater uncertainty into the various nodes in a network of linked attitudes that true and lasting change (conversion) is achieved over time. This also would seem to be a key process in “cognitive reorganization,” a long-discussed but under-explicated and little-investigated phenomenon that has played an explanatory role in many important consistency theories in social psychology (e.g., balance theory, cognitive dissonance, etc.).

The effects of minority influence, considered from the perspective of attitudes as evaluations enmeshed in a complex structural network of associated evaluations, can be varied, distinct, and disparate. A minority-sourced message that is weak or delivered by an out-group will not persuade because it will not introduce uncertainty into the network. A moderately strong message attributed to an in-group minority may stimulate immediate and discernible change in an attitude (or attitudes) linked to the focus of the persuasion message, but the change might not be sufficient to cause a realignment of the associative network. In this case, no focal influence

would be evident, and the indirect change itself would be ephemeral. Ultimately, the inertia of the belief system would pull the aberrant attitude back to its original position in the structure to reestablish equilibrium. Alternatively, the in-group minority may deliver a strong message capable of withstanding strong counterargumentation. Even in this circumstance, direct (focal) change is unlikely. However, as shown in many studies conducted in laboratories across the western world, change in associated beliefs in the network is quite likely, and if it is of sufficient magnitude, will destabilize the focal attitude so that it, too, will be affected; this change will be delayed, but it will occur.

### **Concluding Comments**

The leniency contract model has been designed to predict the relatively negative outcomes an out-group minority can expect when matters of a subjective nature are at issue and the possibilities of success when the dispute is cast as involving objective or intellectual judgments. The more intriguing and complex results derived from the model are seen in studies involving in-group minorities. In research on these subgroups, all possible outcomes can be predicted, and have been obtained. In this chapter we have attempted to bolster the model by considering the possible cognitive underpinnings of the unusual patterns of findings that have come to characterize research on minority group influence. The model we have outlined appears reasonable and grounded in strong social and cognitive theories. The amalgamation of an integrated associationistic network orientation with a social groups emphasis borrows from the strongest areas of social psychology and communication science, and enables development of a theoretical device of considerable explanatory power. We assume further research on the CCM will result in refinement and modification of the model, as all good research is designed to do,

but believe that the general outlines of this predictive device, which can account for a diverse range of potential outcomes in response to minority influence, will remain relative intact.

Considerations outlined in the expanded CCM, besides being grounded in a diverse body of theory and research ranging from the macro (intra- and intergroup processes) to the micro (attitude networks), have the additional benefit of providing a theoretical perspective that comports with the observable reality of social change made in response to rising social movements and the more general processes of persuasion. Social change—decidedly a persuasion outcome—is not a result of a stand-alone message delivered by a minority source to a recalcitrant privileged majority. Such a message may serve as the impetus for change and a galvanizing force that coalesces people around a common position, but it is through repeated interactions between a minority and its influence targets—interactions involving the delivery of multiple messages—that change occurs. The change that results from this process often becomes so imbedded and integrated within a society that in retrospect, it often seems difficult to believe that the newly arrived-at status quo is anything new at all. This macro-level integration reflects, and is rooted in, the more intra-individual interconnections among beliefs found within individual members of a collective. We believe our expanded model of minority influence provides a theoretical basis from which macro-level social changes can be extrapolated, and perhaps equally importantly, explained.

Social change is inevitable, whether it is brought about by social upheaval invigorated by the power of an idea once whispered furtively but passionately in secret meeting rooms, or via more palatable democratic processes ideally typifying progressive societies. Given the centrality of minority discontent as the engine of social progress, we believe the study of minority

influence is crucial if we seek to expand the near-utopian, but not naïve, possibility of achieving a society characterized by the ideals of freedom tempered with equality.

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## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> The basis of the budding scientific work found in the Renaissance was to be found in earlier writings from the Islamic Golden Age (8<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> centuries AD), whose translations formed the foundation for rapid scientific advance (Crano & Lac, 2012). Why the Islamic Middle East did not evolve in a similar fashion is a question of considerable interest, but its discussion lies well beyond the focus of this chapter.

<sup>ii</sup> From a speech delivered to the Bridgnorth Institute, February 26, 1877.  
<http://www.mondopolitico.com/library/lordacton/freedomantiquity/freedomantiquity.htm>

<sup>iii</sup> While the strength of associate paths has been the subject of considerable theoretical debate and investigative research, the concept of node strength has been subject to considerably less consideration—especially in the study of attitudes. One exception is the work of Pfau and colleagues, which addressed resistance to persuasion. They contend that node strength is positively related to attitude durability (resistance) and that stronger nodes exert a greater impact within attitudinal networks (Pfau 2003, 2005).

<sup>iv</sup> We are concerned here with minority influence, but for a description of differences in the processes activated in successful majority and minority influence, see Crano (2012).

<sup>v</sup> Moving against the out-group's position is unlikely. Contrast effects in response to out-group persuasion are quite rare, and usually involve a negative relation between out-group source and in-group target (Brewer & Crano, 1994).

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<sup>vi</sup> If the indirect change is not great, the imbalance introduced into the network is not sufficient to cause a radical restructuring, and the indirectly changed attitude is likely to snap back to its original value (Crano & Chen, 1998).