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Social Influence and Group Identity

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social influence, group identity, social identity, informational influence, normative influence, social norms, referent informational influence, injunctive norms

Abstract

This chapter reviews research on the group identity explanation of social influence, grounded in self-categorization theory, and contrasts it with other group-based explanations, including normative influence, interdependence, and social network approaches, as well as approaches to persuasion and influence that background group (identity) processes. Although the review primarily discusses recent research, its focus also invites reappraisal of some classic research in order to address basic questions about the scope and power of the group identity explanation. The self-categorization explanation of influence grounded in group norms, moderated by group identification, is compared and contrasted to other normative explanations of influence, notably the concept of injunctive norms and the relation to moral conviction. A range of moderating factors relating to individual variation, features of the intragroup and intergroup context, and important contextual variables (i.e., anonymity versus visibility, isolation versus copresence) that are particularly relevant to online influence in the new media are also reviewed.

Contents

INTRODUCTION

This review addresses the role of group identity in the social influence process. The notion of social influence covers a very broad range of phenomena encompassing several literatures, of which research on group influence is apparently but one small part. Interpersonal and informational influence are often contrasted with influence by the group, and there is an abundant literature on attitude change and persuasion that backgrounds the process of group influence or sees it as a source of bias to be contrasted with systematic information processing (e.g., Eagly & Chaiken 1993, Petty & Cacioppo 1986). In introductory texts these topics are often separated or spread under a number of headings. This fragmentation is unfortunate, and one aim of this review is to attempt a more integrated overview of the role of group identity in social influence.

This review differs somewhat from the traditional formula whereby coverage departs from where an earlier review left off 5–15 years prior, because a group identity approach to influence has not hitherto received full attention in this series. An excellent review by Wood (2000) devoted about four pages to the social identity approach, Cialdini & Goldstein (2004) dedicated to the topic half of that, and subsequent treatments of social norms (e.g., Miller & Prentice 2016) have not addressed group identity at all. Whereas social identity approaches to intergroup relations have had international impact, the social identity approach to social influence has been greater in Europe and Australia than in the United States and is published more in European journals. Arguably the best theoretical overview, provided by Turner (1991), is dated and has been out of print for decades, so there is a need to remind a broader and younger audience of what this approach adds to our understanding of social influence and how it contrasts with other approaches, in particular those focusing on group influence. For such reasons I have taken the liberty to cover some older ground where necessary.

One aim is to see how broadly we can cast the scope of identity-based group influence. The idea that group influence occupies one small corner of the literature on influence is perhaps reinforced by stereotyped notions of what groups and group identities are. When we talk of groups we might think of small face-to-face groups or of larger social categories defining social identities. Part of the issue is that we have perhaps a too narrow "sociological" idea of what group identity is. Even

when a group identity is not explicitly evoked or made salient, identity-based group influence may still play a role.

Let's start off with a thought experiment to see how broadly group identity might operate. Normally we would define a group as some subset of other humans with whom we have some bond. But as self-categorization theory (SCT) (Turner 1987) made clear, we can self-categorize in increasingly inclusive groups, up to and including the human at the superordinate level. Indeed, much influence is implicitly premised on a shared understanding of what it is to be human and on the expectation of a common agreement on basic issues of perception. The classic studies of majority influence in the Asch paradigm (Asch 1956) play on this point. In this paradigm several others who are (unbeknownst to the participant) confederates of the experimenter join a naive participant. One by one they each claim that the shorter line of three matches the target, when another longer line of the three is clearly the correct length match. The participant is often drawn to align with these clearly erroneous judgments. Turner (1991) has argued that this is actually a case of minority influence, given the deviation from presumed perceptual consensus: This only becomes a problem once we assume that this apparently deviant minority must share a common human perceptual faculty. The point here is that most of us have common expectations of how others perceive based on our belonging to the human species. This process implicates theory-of-mind assumptions (i.e., that we will agree with others on matters of objective perception) (but see Germar & Mojzisch 2019).

We can take this argument still further, moving even across species. If we are alone in a foreign forest and see a rabbit startled by something we cannot see and haring off in fear, it might be natural for us to be wary and perhaps flee ourselves. Reacting to the reactions of others is sometimes called a social appraisal (Manstead & Fischer 2001), but the notion has hitherto been reserved for reactions to other humans. But surely it is also rational to be influenced by animals if we think this can provide us with useful information that can ensure our survival? Here too we can imagine theory-of-mind considerations about rabbit psychology, whereby we trust rabbits' judgments of potential predators. At some higher level an identity process might be at work: We share the common identity of tiger prey, after all (and tigers are not fussy eaters). The point is that there are conditions under which social influence even by animals might become relevant. Identity relevance is a key concept here and one at best implicit, if not neglected, in theories of influence, and I argue that this relevance links identity to influence. In this sense I would argue that, even in research in which identity processes are not mentioned, they might often play a key role. Group identity references not just a form of self; an oft-neglected sense of identity is the implied similarity that allows us to share perspectives with even the strangest of bedfellows (e.g., rabbits) through the powerful process of categorization implying similar kinds (Murphy & Medin 1985). As I argue below, this gives identity (or social categorization) an advantage over similarity per se.

Social influence generally arises when we are uncertain what to believe. As the Asch paradigm shows, uncertainty can arise that did not previously exist, and it might invoke questions about identity and our relation to the group. Caught in the middle between our individual perception and reason (our own senses and views, which we routinely trust) on one side and the group on the other, it is as if we had angel and devil on opposite shoulders, contrasting individual rationality and group bias (Spears 2010). This review questions this dilemma, reclaiming the group's reason to some extent but also asserting the agency of the self (we are members of the group after all). It can be rational to listen to the views of many (the wisdom of the crowd) rather than being the prisoner of one's own individual biases, but we are also active participants in the group process (Moscovici 1976).

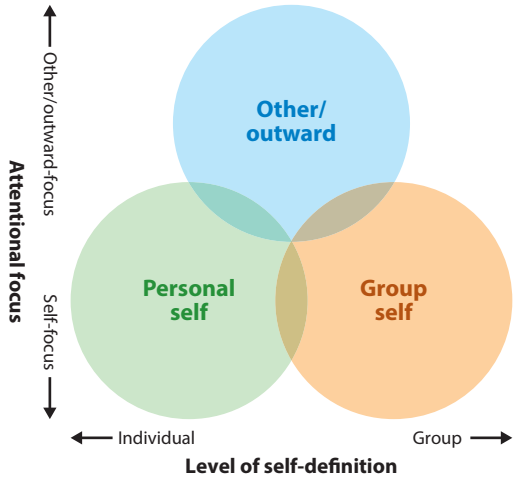

Figure 1

A three realms integrative model of social influence.

Before we begin, I provide a conceptual scheme that relates different realms of social influence. **Figure 1** describes three general realms of influence defined by how they reflect a focus on the self in the influence process—specifically, the levels of self implicated (personal versus group, on the horizontal axis) and whether a self process is implicated at all (self-focus, on the vertical axis).

This attempt to provide a systematic overview of influence research and theories shares some aims with previous work, notably by Nail et al. (2000), that presents a descriptive taxonomy distinguishing no less than 16 different forms of influence. The present taxonomy is simpler and more theoretical than descriptive, focusing primarily on the role of self/identity. The (inter)personal and group realms map onto the two different forms of group influence addressed next. Although a form of group influence, normative influence (Deutsch & Gerard 1955) arguably implicates personal identity and interpersonal (or intragroup) dynamics in which the individual takes into account the impression made on others. Interdependence and network approaches also typically focus on the relation of the individual to others in the group or social network, although when social categories become salient, the focus may shift to group identity. The mindset associated with the personal realm focuses on self-interests and personal goals and motives as well as the need to fit in (see also Baumeister & Leary 1995, Brewer 1991). By contrast, the group realm focuses on group identity, particularly for high identifiers who focus on in-group norms (Ellemers et al. 2002), and on group interests (e.g., Packer 2008).

Turning to the realm of the other, because the focus is not on the self, there are few concerns about creating or protecting the self. This implies a more other-focused or task-focused mindset that allows for the consideration of information from outside the vantage point of the self and without (at least) strong self-motives. This is the domain of informational influence (Deutsch & Gerard 1955), which is detached from identity concerns (e.g., argument strength), be these personal or group-based identities, and is the focus of much of the persuasion and attitude change literature. This is not to deny the absence of motivation: This realm allows for the use of information-processing and problem-solving skills that have no obvious origins in the self or group but could ultimately contribute to satisfaction and esteem.

Although our main focus is on the group identity–based influence process, I briefly outline other forms of group influence for comparative purposes.

GROUP INFLUENCE WITHOUT GROUP IDENTITY: INTERDEPENDENCE, INDIVIDUAL INTEREST, AND IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Group influence research is heavily influenced by the dual process model of Deutsch & Gerard (1955), which distinguished between informational influence and normative influence. Informational influence is typically characterized as true influence leading to a private acceptance of the message. Normative influence, defined as conforming to the positive expectations of others, is a form of influence whereby people comply with the group in order to gain rewards (such as approval) or avoid disapproval. Normative influence is thus socially motivated in the sense that it addresses individual needs for approval and belonging, but it is instrumental (i.e., a form of going along to get along) and thus is perhaps more associated with power than with influence per se. Other theories also emphasize the individual interest associated with influence in the group. In the Lewinian tradition of social exchange theories (e.g., Thibaut & Kelley 1959) and interdependence approaches (e.g., Cartwright & Zander 1968), influence is closely aligned with power and with social rewards derived from interaction and interdependence with others. So to the extent that we can talk of group influence, this reflects the relation of the individual to the group, an intragroup process that implicates the personal rather than the group self.

The dual process model is just one early theory among several to distinguish different forms of influence. Although other multiple process theories of influence and power did consider identity as a basis for influence (e.g., French & Raven 1959, Kelman 1958) the concept of group identity had yet to develop at the time, and without a concept of group identity to render the process internal, group influence retained an element of instrumentality or external pressure. The problem is that the form that group influence typically takes in the dual process account seems to preclude the possibility of group influence as true influence (qua internalized acceptance). One reason this is not typically flagged as a problem is that it fits the classical conceptualization of the group as an external entity in the group dynamics literature. Because the group reflects relations of interdependence, it is understandable that influence should be seen as group pressure (as compliance as opposed to conformity). A theoretical shift was needed to see the group as part of the self and to allow for the possibility that true group influence might produce private acceptance. The distinction between informational and normative influence has meanwhile become so ingrained in the social influence literature that the two notions are often cited as given concepts without further elaboration (see, e.g., Miller & Prentice 2016).

There is much recent research on what might be called network-based approaches to social influence, whereby influence arises from one's position in social networks and interactions with others in the network form the channels of social influence (e.g., Leszczensky et al. 2019, Zingora et al. 2020). For example, in a study of student networks, Zingora et al. (2020) found that interpersonal bonds channelled influence on intergroup attitudes, with popular students having greater influence. The relation to group identity is often implicit in this literature, arguably because the focus is on interpersonal bonds and interactions rather than group identity (see Postmes et al. 2005). These approaches often emphasize physical and spatial parameters such as proximity, number, and strength of sources (see, e.g., Latané 1981).

Although these models have descriptive value and predictive utility, the process or mechanism by which influence operates is not always clear. What determines the strength and impact of a source? Identifying the pathways to influence does not necessarily explain the process. As research on interpersonal contact (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp 2008) shows, exposure to members of out-groups does not guarantee a positive influence from them. Although diversity and group differences are often considered in these approaches, the interpersonal bonds/interactions in the network often take precedence over group identity considerations.

However, network approaches also consider psychological and sociometric variables. For example, an important factor is homophily, or the notion that we tend to be influenced more by similar or like-minded others (e.g., Feliciani et al. 2017). This touches on questions of group identity because social categories such as gender and ethnicity can imply or foster perceptions of similarity. However, opinion-based or attitudinal similarity, which is of particular relevance to social influence, can also form the basis of social categories, as research by McGarty and colleagues has shown (Bliuc et al. 2007, McGarty et al. 2009). The question then arises of which process (similarity or social categorization) might be driving outcomes such as social influence. Categorization is arguably the more powerful process, because, as cognitive psychologists such as Medin have shown, it can underlie many inferences of similarity at deeper levels (Murphy & Medin 1985). Moreover, despite much evidence that similarity fosters attraction (Byrne 1971), social identity researchers have shown it is important to distinguish between interpersonal and group-based social attraction, with the latter coming to the fore in (inter)group contexts (e.g., Hogg & Hains 1996). Classic research on minimal groups also suggests that social categorization rather than similarity drives the processes underlying in-group favoritism (Billig & Tajfel 1973). In short, similarity is important to the extent that it is both an input and an outcome of the social categorization process.

In sum, network approaches to influence seem well placed to account for the spread of influence, but the process through which this happens, even if we can model it and predict its spread, is not always clear, especially when it meets group boundaries. Much research on social influence in groups has an interpersonal or intragroup focus emphasizing spatial and structural factors (proximity, contact, etc.) or interpersonal relations (interdependence, reciprocity). Moreover, other sociometric factors (e.g., liking, homophily) are often treated as (inter)personal- rather than group-level factors. When group norms are invoked (as in normative influence), the orientation is largely instrumental and thus is typically not defined as producing true (group) influence. In conclusion, how network- and group identity–based processes interact is an exciting topic that is ripe for further investigation.

THE GROUP IDENTITY APPROACH TO SOCIAL INFLUENCE: REAPPRAISING CLASSIC RESEARCH

Turner and his associates used SCT to propose a (then) new approach to social influence that challenged the dual process model. Normative influence surely occurs [for the reasons Deutsch & Gerard (1955) proposed], but the point is that this is not the only form that group influence can take: Group influence could also reflect an internal process akin to informational influence, whereby group members trust their group to provide valid information on the judgment question. Whereas normative influence produces compliance, according to SCT group influence can result in true influence (i.e., private acceptance, conformity). The self-categorization approach to group influence harks back to the early focus on reference groups developed by Kelley, Festinger, and others (see, e.g., Kelley 1952). In part as a homage to these classical roots, and in part to make the point that group influence is also informational, Turner (1982, 1987, 1991) labeled this form of group influence "referent informational influence" (RII).

RII thus transcends the previous dual process account by merging informational and group influence. This theoretical shift also undermines another classical binary distinction introduced by Festinger (1950), the one between physical reality testing and social reality testing. Physical reality testing is typically the product of our senses (as in the Asch experiments). Social reality testing only comes into play when we are less certain (e.g., in the realm of opinions and values) and might therefore rely on others. However, a problem emerges even in apparently perceptually clear contexts if we find out that we disagree while expecting to agree. As Turner (1991) persuasively

argued, participants in the Asch paradigm can be genuinely perplexed that others do not perceive lines the same way they do, and the doubt can be sufficient to affect private acceptance as well as public compliance. Following Moscovici (1976), Turner made the point that even dimensions of perception that seem entirely external and objective depend on shared social conventions and institutions (e.g., systems of measurement). Turner does not question that we routinely rely on our senses, but he argues that physical and social reality testing are in practice often blurred and typically occur in tandem: We listen to or consult with like-minded others to validate our perceptions, and we use perceptions to evaluate the consensus or opinions of others. These two processes do not map onto different forms of influence. Perception will often precede consensual validation, but not always, as we may get information from our group first. Moreover, as philosophers from Kant to Wittgenstein have long noted, what we perceive is a step removed from how we interpret the information and give it meaning, and here other group members play a key role.

The fundamental insight of the self-categorization approach to group influence is that the group is not only an external entity but (for high identifiers, at least) becomes internalized as a level of self. Thus, social influence is partly self-influence, saved from circularity by the fact that other in-group members form its source. The key point is that when there is uncertainty or a gap in our own experience or knowledge, we typically assume our in-group members have a view of social reality that is similar to ours and can be informative. SCT conceptualizes group identities as levels of self that typically become salient in intergroup contexts and that should be distinguished from personal identity. We have not only multiple group identities (e.g., as fellow fans at a sports game) but also potentially diverse personal identities (e.g., as friends or family members) that are defined by the social frame of reference. Group identities become salient depending on their relevance to the context (e.g., the fit with an intergroup context), and aspects of our makeup and history influence the tendency to self-categorize in a certain way (accessibility or perceptual readiness; see Oakes 1987). The fit refers to the fact that groups not only may differ on a dimension such as an attitude topic (i.e., comparative fit) but also tend to do so in expected or stereotypic ways (i.e., normative fit). Let us illustrate these principles with some research.

Our identification with a group is perhaps the key moderating factor that determines our perceptual readiness to self-categorize according to that group identity, resulting in conformity to salient group norms (Ellemers et al. 2002). For example, White et al. (2009), discussed further below, showed that high identifiers were more likely to conform to group norms of waste recycling. The attitude topic itself could also define the relevant group identity guiding group influence—especially where different social/self-categorizations are possible—following the principles of comparative and normative fit. For example, in an experiment by Lea et al. (2007), also discussed below, attitude topics were discussed in four-person groups comprising people of different nationalities (two British and two Dutch) and different genders (two men and two women, one from each nationality). Discussion topics were pre-tested and chosen to differentiate between nationalities (e.g., the topic "British food is bad" would have the Dutch in favor and the British against) or genders (e.g., "there should be more sport on TV" would have the men in favor and the women against). As predicted, the subgroups showed bipolarization away from each other and toward their respective group norms but only when the topic was relevant to that identity (i.e., the nationalities bipolarized on the British food item and the genders bipolarized on the TV sport item). The intergroup differentiation and conformity to the (sub)group norms thus reflected not only the comparative fit differentiating subgroups but also the normative fit (i.e., the norms also reflected the content of the group stereotypes).

The relevant group identity is likely to depend on the social context and can be very broad or quite narrow. When judging the length of lines (as in the Asch paradigm), people with normal eyesight might form the basis of the relevant group identity. On matters of political opinion,

however, the relevant in-group identity may be much narrower, comprising like-minded people from one's social milieu (Bliuc et al. 2007, McGarty et al. 2009). Self-categorization theorists have long argued that self-categorization is highly flexible, fluid, and context dependent, despite many other scholars arguing that some social categorizations (like sex and ethnicity) are dominant, if not prepotent (Oakes et al. 1994). Recent research, particularly in social neuroscience, has however come round to the view that apparently dominant social categorizations can be overridden by self-categorizations that better fit the context and better reflect the (group) interests of the participants in situ (e.g., Kurzban et al. 2001; see Cikara & van Bavel 2014 for a review). Brain imaging research confirms that even briefly activated, minimal group identities (i.e., one-off groups created in the lab) can implicate the self (Volz et al. 2009), as proposed by SCT. Such arguments apply no less to the self-categorizations that drive social influence and preferences for information from the in-group: It is surely rational and adaptive to invoke self-categories and defer judgment to group expertise relevant to the topic and context.

Early work on group identity–based influence tested predictions from SCT/RII in a range of classic paradigms. For example, Abrams et al. (1990) showed that in the autokinetic illusion paradigm used by Sherif [1966 (1936)], whereby group members typically converge on estimates of the movement of a light-point in a dark room (an optical illusion), convergence is stronger when group members share a common social identity. Similarly, in the Asch paradigm, common group membership strengthens the social influence to conform to the (incorrect) confederate majority in designating line lengths. Much early research confirmed that in-group sources tended to be more influential and promote more thorough information processing than out-group sources (e.g., Mackie et al. 1990, McGarty et al. 1994). We elaborate on some further details of this approach when considering moderator variables in the section titled Moderators of Group Identity–Based Influence.

Another classic paradigm concerns obedience to authority. The studies conducted by Milgram in the 1960s were originally framed in the realm of power or compliance rather than of internalized influence (see Milgram 1974). However, the idea that such authorities have legitimacy brings them within the purview of the social identity approach to influence (Turner 1991), as Turner's (2005) reformulation of power made clear. In line with SCT, he argued that effective power reflects a more internalized, identity-driven process than does compliance to an external authority based on coercion. Power that does not require coercion but co-opts the target (i.e., by genuine internalized influence) is more powerful and sustainable, because it does not require surveillance and enforcement (Turner 2005). Following this lead, Haslam, Reicher, and colleagues have recently argued for a reappraisal of the classic Milgram studies and claimed that rather than reflecting (blind) obedience to authority, the results of the experiment fit with a group identity–based social influence process in which participants identify with the project by following legitimate leaders and ideals of science (Haslam & Reicher 2012, Haslam et al. 2014) (see also the social identity analysis of leadership and expertise elaborated in the section titled Moderators of Group Identity–Based Influence).

Another classic area of research that invokes social influence processes is the study of the mass or crowd. Strictly speaking, this realm can be divided into two distinct domains: research on crowding (typically relevant to how people react in the mass, e.g., during emergency evacuations) and research on crowd behavior relating to collective action and social unrest (e.g., rioting). Classic research has tended to strip both of these domains of their social identity–based content and context, and we address the two areas briefly in turn.

The question of how people in the mass react during emergencies has typically tended to assume that people simply focus on individual self-interest (and thus individual identity) (see **Figure 1**), that is, everyone for themselves. However, a program of research by Drury and

colleagues has used self-categorization principles to show that behavior in such situations is highly socially structured, and people often conform to prosocial norms even if it involves self-sacrificing behavior (Drury 2018; Drury et al. 2009, 2016). Drury (2018) argues that more often than not, disaster is avoided or ameliorated by a spontaneous self-organization grounded in a common fate and the shared identity this invokes.

In addition to supporting a social identity–based analysis, this research also concurs with theorizing in evolutionary psychology and behavioral economics that confirms that humans are an inherently cooperative species prone to self-sacrifice for the group and even altruistic punishment of free riders (e.g., Fehr & Gachter 2002, Rand & Nowak 2013). In support of this, and in contrast to classic research on bystander intervention suggesting that people are reluctant to help others, especially as the presence of others increases (Latané & Darley 1970), research following group identity principles by Levine and colleagues has consistently shown that people will come to the aid of others in peril, but primarily when they share a social identity with them (Levine & Crowther 2008; see also Manning et al. 2007).

Classic research on social and emotional contagion processes and automatic behavior can be subjected to a similar reappraisal. Research indicates that such automatic influence, frequently assumed to be an automatic process of mimicry based on exposure to the behavior of others (van Baaren et al. 2009), is often group identity–bound: It occurs primarily when targets share a group identity with the source (e.g., van der Schalk et al. 2011), and, in accordance with the research on intergroup helping, it stops or even reverses when it reaches out-group boundaries (e.g., Spears et al. 2004). A key difference with the research on behavior in emergencies is that this approach posits that people bring their prior identities and intergroup agendas to the social context.

This is much more clearly the case for crowd behavior relating to social unrest (e.g., rioting), because, as Reicher and colleagues have argued, such behavior occurs in an intergroup context between antagonists (e.g., protestors and police) who clearly bring their identities and intergroup histories with them. Classic research in social psychology has not always seen it this way. Notably, the deindividuation explanation of crowd behavior, influenced by the theorizing of Le Bon [1995 (1895); see Festinger et al. 1952], pathologized the crowd as a mad mob running amok in which individuals lost their individual rationality, resulting in the deregulation of normally prosocial behavior (e.g., Diener 1980). This research, especially in its experimental focus, typically excluded the intergroup context altogether (Reicher 1987). Reicher and colleagues developed a social identity–based analysis (e.g., Drury et al. 2020, Hopkins et al. 2019, Reicher 1987) proposing that rather than losing one's self or identity in the mass, crowd members actually switch to a group identity. In self-categorization terms, immersion in the crowd reinforces a process of depersonalization rather than deindividuation, of seeing self and others in group terms rather than losing identity and reason. Behavior in the crowd can thus be seen as abiding by group norms, albeit often emerging in context. This was confirmed in a meta-analysis of the deindividuation literature by Postmes & Spears (1998) (see also Spears 2017).[1] It is critical here to distinguish the local group norms attached to the group identity from the generic societal norms that often predefine crowd behavior as generically antinormative, going against prosocial norms. This meta-analysis showed that the classic conditions associated with deindividuation (i.e., group immersion and anonymity in the group) actually enhanced depersonalization and thus conformity to these local group norms. We examine some further developments of this framework applied to online behavior below.

[1]The sociologists Turner & Killian (1972) also developed an emergent norm hypothesis, but their analysis was closer to the normative influence approach than to the one based on group identity.

Last but not least, the classic explanation of minority influence has also been subjected to a reanalysis in terms of SCT (David & Turner 1996, 1999; Turner 1991; see also Cialdini & Goldstein 2004). Moscovici (1976), who pioneered this field, criticized the classical view of majority influence, whereby targets are passive and uncritical recipients of a one-way stream of influence, and proposed the concept of minority influence. Whereas the majority position (and majority influence) is typically orthodox and expected, he proposed that minority positions are scrutinized more carefully exactly because they are unexpected, different, and often deviant. Such scrutiny, or validation, may paradoxically lead to true influence, albeit sometimes indirectly (e.g., on related measures), especially when the minority source is consistent and persistent. However, reviews of the minority influence literature clearly suggest that minorities explicitly categorized as out-groups tend to be less influential than minorities categorized as in-groups (Mugny 1984, Turner 1991). David & Turner (1996, 1999) have made a compelling case that minorities are most influential when they invoke a shared in-group identity with the target. For example, they showed that moderate feminists were influenced by radical feminists when these were characterized as part of the feminist sisterhood (intragroup context) but not when they were depicted as an out-group in an intergroup context (David & Turner 1999).

In sum, although primary research on the theoretical underpinnings of group identity–based influence has waned somewhat in recent years, these principles continue to inspire current research and also reappraisals of classic findings. However, other research with a slightly different approach to social norms has also emerged. We consider this next.

SOCIAL NORMS, MOTIVATION, AND MORALITY

The group identity approach to social norms is not the only one and others have arguably had greater influence (see e.g., Cialdini & Goldstein 2004, Miller & Prentice 2016, van Kleef et al. 2019). Quite often in these approaches the basis of social norms is left unspecified, deriving as much from society, culture, or subculture as from identification with a particular group. Moreover, the power of social norms can be grounded as much in normative influence and interdependence as it is in group identity. A major theoretical development occurred with the distinction, elaborated by Cialdini et al. (1990), between descriptive norms and injunctive norms. Whereas descriptive norms simply describe what others do, injunctive norms prescribe: They imply a moral imperative to act in line with the norm. This development has been highly influential, and these concepts have become widely adopted in the literature on social norms. However, some questions in relation to process and mechanism remain. In Cialdini et al.'s (1990) classic article, the word "group" occurs only twice, and any relation to (group) identity is absent. However, from a self-categorization perspective, a question that arises is how the moral/ought dimension applies to group identity: Might they be related? Theorists of morality in social psychology such as Skitka (e.g., Skitka et al. 2009) tend to treat the moral dimension as an individual conviction in an absolutist deontic sense and as largely unrelated to questions of group identity, much in line with the Kantian ethics of individual moral responsibility. The question of how the social identity approach relates to questions of morality is interesting and rarely addressed explicitly, but there is a clear case to be made that group identity frames values, prescribes norms, and therefore potentially implies group morality. Indeed, the importance of morality to social identity has been a major theme in recent research by Ellemers, Leach, and colleagues (Ellemers 2017; Ellemers et al. 2008, 2013; Leach et al. 2007).

Just as group identification moderates conformity to group norms, we would expect it to also moderate conformity when the norm implies an injunction. Are high identifiers more likely to conform to injunctive norms that form part of the prescriptive content of their group identity? The language of SCT/RII also suggests that group members conform to the normative or prototypical

group position because it is seen as valid, correct, and so forth (Turner 1987, 1991), which seems to go beyond mere description and to imply an injunction or moral ought (Ellemers 2017; Ellemers et al. 2008, 2013; Leach et al. 2007). In domains implicating values, this could clearly imply a moral stance.

Such norms should have less impact for low identifiers. In this case the injunction, rather than adding moral force, may be perceived as an external imposition (e.g., group pressure, normative influence). For example, Christian norms, while ostensibly having a strong injunctive character, may have little impact and even evoke reactance among deviant or secular groups or subcultures. This seems to be confirmed by White et al. (2009), who compared, inter alia, group norms and injunctive norms. They showed that group norms predicted recycling behavior for high identifiers (in line with RII) but social injunctive norms did not. Recent research by Milovanovic (2020) also suggested that a behavioral norm perceived to be injunctive (i.e., what the group says ought to be done) had less impact than norms reflecting group importance (i.e., what the group viewed as important), especially among high identifiers. Further research on this topic is needed, because it remains unclear whether injunctive norms are necessarily personal or can also align with group identity. Complicating matters, group identities can become so internalized (for high identifiers) that they become self-perceived as personal.

The concept of injunctive norms is important because morality is likely to be a critical source of motivation (see also the normative goal frame in goal framing theory and its difference from hedonic and self-interest goals; Lindenberg & Steg 2007). Within social psychology there are also parallels with intrinsic motivation and (individual) autonomy, that is, the idea that we do things on merit and because they are right, rather than because of external incentives or group pressure. This agrees with the self-determination theory of Ryan & Deci (2000), perhaps the dominant perspective on intrinsic motivation. Do notions of autonomy and intrinsic motivation on the one hand and group influence on the other contradict each other? Should we regard autonomy, and indeed morality, as necessarily coupled to individual identity and personal conviction, as Skitka suggests? Another approach to autonomy proposed by the philosopher Raz (1986) conceives autonomy in terms of self-authorship, that is, the ability to define one's capabilities and capacities free of external constraints. Importantly, Raz delineates a more social form of self-authorship, which crucially incorporates influence from groups or group identity as well as personal self-authorship. This allows one's valued group memberships and identities to contribute to self-determination (Van Rugge et al. 2021). This maps onto the self-categorization distinction between personal and group identity and sees them both as parts of the self, with no implied primacy of one over the other.

This reasoning helps to further explicate the nature of group identity–based influence as emanating from outside but also immanent, which has important research implications. For example, recently, Amiot, Thomas, and colleagues have tried to extend self-determination theory to the realm of the group self. Self-determination theory is concerned with intrinsic motivation, that is, the idea that truly willed behavior is fundamentally self-generated rather than externally motivated or moderated. However, self-determination theory, at least in its original formulation, is grounded in a fundamentally individualistic conceptualization of the self. In contrast, the research program by Amiot, Thomas, and colleagues has showed that group-motivated behavior can be as intrinsically motivated as autonomous individual behavior (Amiot et al. 2012, Thomas et al. 2017).

If autonomy and intrinsic motivation can apply to the group level, the same is surely also true for morality. Indeed, morality is not simply something that we are born with or develop alone. We also learn it from our family and our cultural milieu, which arguably include valued group identities. Can morality derived from group identity ever trump the more absolutist deontic form of individual moral conviction? Once again, we do not have to subscribe to a binary choice between

individual and group paths. The two are likely closely connected: What we come to believe as morally right, and highly personal, might have its roots in our group culture and ideology. Indeed, this possibility might even help to explain why apparently evil behavior can be sanctioned and justified, precisely because there are conditions under which it is viewed as socially moral. Take the Holocaust as one notorious example from history. To be sure, there were many individuals in Weimar Germany who bravely resisted the Nazi juggernaut through moral conviction, often at great individual cost. However, equally remarkable is the banal fact that so many believed and went along with the Nazi ideology and its vile propaganda about the Jews. In *The Nazi Conscience*, Koonz (2005) makes the persuasive case that this was only made possible by a justifying moral ideology created at the group level, seeded in historical group interests, and reinforced by a propaganda machine that justified this—hence the oxymoronic title of her book.

This extreme example might incline us to prefer the individual moral conscience to a group-based one. However, this misses the point that our moral convictions are inherently socially developed and constructed even when we construe them in more personal or absolutist terms. Moreover, we should not fall back into the essentialist trap of thinking that groups are necessarily bad and biased or biasing (as a source of influence or otherwise), while individuals are intrinsically good and rational (Spears 2010). To the extent that groups influence us, their norms can be biased towards the in-group and its interests as well as prosocial.

To provide one example of group identity–based injunctive norms, an early explanation of in-group bias in the minimal group paradigm, considered by Tajfel, was the existence of a "generic" norm to "support one's own team" (Tajfel et al. 1971). However, Tajfel ultimately rejected this normative explanation because he deemed it circular, unable to specify the mechanism or process by which bias occurs, and ignoring an equally plausible and pervasive norm that prescribes fairness. Thus emerged his preferred social identity explanation according to which group members discriminate to positively differentiate their group from the out-group. However, in recent research Iacoviello & Spears (2018) resurrected the "generic" norm hypothesis by invoking Cialdini's distinction between descriptive and injunctive norms. Their rationale was that norms prescribing in-group bias and norms prescribing fairness, rather than contradicting each other, refer to different groups or levels of self-categorization and thus different injunctive norms. Whereas people may infer that their own group expects them to reward them, and even that it is loyal to do so (i.e., charity begins at home), at the more supraordinate societal level there is an expectation to treat all individuals and groups equally and fairly. Indeed, fairness is a dominant norm among bodies such as the United Nations and ingrained in theories of justice with their Kantian foundations [e.g., Rawls 1999 (1971)].

Interestingly, however, this research also showed that norms prescribing in-group bias rather than being "generic" were moderated by political ideology, such that right-wingers showed more in-group bias and were less likely to endorse the (supraordinate) fairness norm compared to left-wingers (Iacoviello & Spears 2018). This resonates with research by Haidt and colleagues about the different moral priorities of those on the left and the right of the political spectrum (e.g., Graham et al. 2009). Liberals are typically more focused on fairness/reciprocity and harm/care (clearly associated with the supraordinate level of human rights), whereas other factors (including group loyalty) acquire relatively more weight for conservatives. What this confirms is that there is no one-size-fits-all, "generic" norm; rather, the relevant group priority is flexible and politically contingent. This resonates with our more general argument that relevant group identities are not given or dominant, but highly variable and even contested. The nature and direction of social influence is therefore likely to depend on how such dilemmas and debates are resolved, both within the group and within one's head, especially as a moral case can be made both for group loyalty and for treating everyone (including different groups) fairly.

MODERATORS OF GROUP IDENTITY–BASED INFLUENCE

What are the social psychological factors that explain the degree of influence by the in-group? This section presents three factors that can moderate group identity–based influence: (*a*) relations within the group and individual-level variables, (*b*) relations between groups, and (*c*) contextual moderators.

Relations Within the Ingroup and Person-Level Factors: Prototypicality and Group Identification

According to SCT, the most normative and influential position within the group is defined by the prototypical position that maximizes similarity to other in-group members and differences with out-group members (the principle of meta-contrast) (Turner 1987, 1991; Wetherell 1987). This analysis has been used to explain another classical social influence effect, namely group polarization (Turner 1991, Wetherell 1987; see also Abrams et al. 1990, McGarty et al. 1994). This phenomenon, whereby discussion of an attitude topic or choice dilemma in the group results in a group shift toward the pole already favored by group members, was originally a puzzle for conformity research. The RII/SCT solution proposed that there is actually an intergroup dimension to these ostensibly intragroup discussions, because the preference for one side of the decision continuum (e.g., the risky or cautious side of a choice dilemma) was predicated on an implicit opposition with an out-group external to the discussion. This provides a demonstration of the RII principle of meta-contrast and also makes clear how the group-based account of self-categorization deviates from the more classic account of group dynamics: For SCT, a group effectively becomes salient and operative only in contrast to a (relevant) out-group in an intergroup context (i.e., us versus them).

The principle that prototypical group members will be more influential than peripheral or nonprototypical members has been particularly impactful on work on leadership. This topic was already anticipated by Turner (1987) and has spawned an extensive social identity literature (see, e.g., Haslam et al. 2011, Hogg & van Knippenberg 2003). Barreto & Hogg (2017) provide a recent meta-analysis of 20 studies showing that more prototypical leaders are more influential and command followership within the group. For example, in one study Platow et al. (2006) showed that leaders who were stereotypically prototypical of the in-group received stronger attributions of leadership charisma than nonprototypical members—they were perceived as doing a better job of representing the group ("us"). Such findings perhaps also help to make sense of the rise of political populism in many countries around the world. Al Gore may have seemed smarter than "Dubya" Bush to many, but the latter's success is arguably evidence that having the common touch can be more prototypical and more important.

As we have emphasized throughout, some commitment to the group is necessary for group identity–based influence to occur, so a key moderator is group identification: High identifiers are more likely to conform to in-group norms (Ellemers et al. 2002). Group identification may also interact in interesting ways with the individual's position within the group (prototypical versus peripheral) to produce intragroup dynamics that affect social conformity. For example, peripheral group members, in danger of being rejected by the group, may be particularly motivated to conform or even overconform, especially if they identify highly, in order to prove their worth (Jetten & Hornsey 2011, 2014; Jetten et al. 2003; Noel et al. 1995; Postmes & Jetten 2006). These effects are reminiscent of initiation rites and hazing in gang or mob culture, which are designed to produce group loyalty. Ellemers & Jetten (2013) provide an overview of research on the various ways in which marginalized group members cope with their position, including through (over)conformity.

Sometimes, however, conforming to group norms may be perceived as contradicting the group's interests, so that high identifiers in particular (for whom the group's interests are paramount) encounter a dilemma: Should they conform or protect and promote the group's interests? For example, through history many disadvantaged groups have initially followed group norms requiring them to accept their low status and appease the powerful out-group (often for good reason, given power differences and the costs of resistance), but then those norms have changed through group struggle led by a vanguard who contested them (Becker et al. 2011). In line with this, in his normative conflict model Packer argued that high identifiers often choose to reject group norms they see as detrimental to the group's interests (Packer 2008, 2014; Packer & Chasteen 2010; see also Ellemers & Jetten 2013).

Bringing this theme together with the previous one, recent research by Masson & Fritsche (2019) confirms that high identifying group members might be particularly likely to deviate in this way, but only when their position is prototypical and thus secure (what is called loyal deviance). Do such findings contradict the group identity approach to influence? Superficially they do, perhaps, but it would be mistaken to assume that the social identity approach eschews a focus on group interest in favor of identity concerns. Interest flows from a focus on group identity as well as on the individual, especially for high identifiers.

Factors associated with the individual that are ostensibly unrelated to the group level (unlike prototypicality or identification) may sometimes have group-level effects, affecting conformity to group norms. For example, recent research by Leander et al. (2020) found that threatening personal control can increase conformity to both antisocial (aggressive) norms and prosocial norms, depending on which ones are normative for the group. However, this effect was not moderated by group identification, which typically provides the litmus test of whether group identity is the driving process. This compensation effect is more consistent with a normative influence interpretation (i.e., that people comply to garner approval from the group) rather than an explanation based on influence via group identity (cf. Stollberg et al. 2017).

Relations Between Groups and Intergroup Factors: Salience and Identity Threat

People are more likely to retreat into their group identity (and thus trust in-group sources) when the group is under threat or in conflict with other groups. This also makes sense of the evolutionary importance of group identity (Dunbar et al. 2005). This idea is hardly new and is central to all main theories of intergroup conflict and intergroup relations. High identifiers, in particular, are likely to embrace their group identity even when this implies accepting a stigma or low status (Ellemers et al. 2002). Specifically, under such group-level threats group members are likely to self-stereotype and conform more to the prototypical in-group position (Spears et al. 1997), to close ranks and perceive greater in-group as well as out-group homogeneity (Doosje et al. 1995), and generally to show more group loyalty, avoiding individual mobility to escape the group even when possible and individually advantageous (Ellemers et al. 1997). Indeed, the possibility of individual mobility may paradoxically reinforce the loyalty test of remaining faithful when the going gets tough (Spears 2014).

As well as conforming more to in-group norms when group identity is salient, and especially when threatened, group members may also be likely to contrast their position with the one adopted by the out-group. This idea was already invoked in the SCT explanation of group polarization. When the in-group does not give a lead, information from out-group antagonists can tell us what not to do (see also Nail et al. 2000). In benign form, we see this process in youth culture: The new generation is typically keen to differentiate itself from its parents, especially on dimensions of taste (Spears et al. 2009). Indeed, being complimented or respected by an out-group

could even be aversive and lead to attempts to differentiate from one's group (Ellemers et al. 2004).

Threats to group identity do not necessarily always result in antisocial behavior, as we saw in the research of Leander et al. (2020)—this will likely depend on salient group norms. Thus Stollberg et al. (2017) showed that when group control (as opposed to personal control in the research of Leander and colleagues) was threatened by a terrorist attack, their student sample embraced liberal norms rejecting right-wing protest rather than jumping on this (out-group) bandwagon. Consistent with the intergroup level of the control threat, this was interpreted as a group identity influence effect, in contrast to the research by Leander et al. (2020).

Influence based on conformity to norms associated with group identity and on intergroup contrast with out-group sources may often occur quite unconsciously and automatically as noted earlier when discussing classic contagion effects (Spears et al. 2004, Van der Schalk et al. 2011). Sometimes intergroup behavioral contrast may not serve the interests of the group, however (see Packer's research discussed above). For example, De Lemus et al. (2012) replicated a classic behavioral complementarity contrast effect in which women exposed via video to a dominant male instructor who assumed a broad posture (a classic macho power pose) adopted a more submissive narrow posture, exhibiting complementary behavioral contrast. However, this only occurred when the male was smiling; when he had a neutral/negative expression women resisted and did not shrink their posture, shifting the focus from interpersonal pleasantry to intergroup antagonism.

Cross-cultural variability in reactance (i.e., behavioral resistance resulting from threats to freedom or control; see Brehm 1966) also supports a group-level analysis of contrastive or intergroup counter-influence. Research by Jonas et al. (2009) showed that people from individualistic cultures exhibit stronger reactance than people from collectivistic cultures, presumably because of the cultural importance of individual freedom in individualistic Western culture. In contrast, Graupmann et al. (2012) found that people from a collectivist culture (Taiwan) did not show reactance when their freedom was infringed by the in-group but did so when it was infringed by an out-group. In a second study, those with more independent self-construals showed more reactance to an in-group source, whereas those with more interdependent construals showed more reactance to an out-group source. Thus, reactance seems to be dependent on the dominant realm of self (see **Figure 1**), with those more anchored in the personal self (i.e., the independent self typical of Western culture) showing stronger reactance to the in-group (the classical form of reactance described in Brehm 1966) and those more invested in their group or collective and with an interdependent self (typical of Asian culture) showing more reactance to an out-group.

Collective action arising from intergroup conflict is particularly subject to the group identity–based influence processes discussed here. Although we have already considered crowd behavior, a fuller treatment of collective action is beyond the current scope. However, it is useful to note approaches to this topic that focus on the critical role of social identity (Drury et al. 2020, Reicher 1987), the role played by group identification (van Zomeren et al. 2008), and the role of intergroup emotions as channels for group identity–based influence (e.g., Smith 1993; van Zomeren et al. 2004, 2012). In particular, group emotions (e.g., anger at the out-group or authorities) have the character of group norms that motivate corresponding action tendencies (e.g., antagonistic approach behavior such as protest demonstrations or even rioting).

Contextual Moderators and Online Social Influence

We now focus on additional contextual factors, often ostensibly incidental to group identity, that nevertheless affect group influence. Particularly relevant in the modern age are social isolation (versus copresence) and anonymity (versus visibility), which are common features of online groups

in the Internet era. Allport (1954, p. 5) famously defined social psychology as "the scientific attempt to explain how the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of other human beings." On this basis, we would expect the isolation and anonymity that feature all too commonly in our online lives (and especially now, as I am writing this during the COVID-19 lockdown) to undermine the integrity and impact of the group. Yet this illustrates perhaps the most radical departure of the group identity approach to influence from the classic approach to group dynamics: Because the group is defined as a dimension of the self, these factors should not necessarily undermine the impact of the group, and even implied presence should not be necessary to have group effects.

Such issues have indeed received increasing attention within the field of communication science in analyses of the effects of social influence in the new social media and in virtual environments in which physical proximity and copresence are missing. Does this isolation and visual anonymity weaken social influence, as the early analyses of such media suggested (Kiesler et al. 1984)? Accumulating evidence suggests that this is not the case. Paradoxically, the reverse seems to be true. This paradox is addressed in the social identity model of deindividuation effects (SIDE model) (Klein et al. 2007, Postmes & Spears 1998, Reicher et al. 1995, Spears 2017, Spears & Lea 1994). It is important to distinguish cognitive SIDE effects, which affect the salience of group identity, from strategic SIDE effects, which relate more to power relations that take into consideration the accountability of individuals to in-group and out-group audiences and that call into play self-presentational processes (including normative influence and compliance). Given our primary focus on group identity–based social influence, I focus primarily here on the cognitive effects relevant to influence (see, e.g., Spears & Postmes 2015 for a more complete review).

The SIDE model developed from a social identity critique of the deindividuation research on crowd behavior introduced above (see also Klein et al. 2007, Postmes & Spears 1998, Reicher et al. 1995, Spears 2017), and it argued that the group immersion and anonymity that crowd behavior entails could actually enhance the salience of that group identity, leading to greater influence by the group and its norms. Anonymity could paradoxically serve to strengthen group identity salience by detracting from visible individuation typical of face-to-face (FtF) interaction and enhancing depersonalization (i.e., the tendency to see group members as similar and interchangeable, not to be confused with the loss of self implied by deindividuation theories). Applying this line of reasoning to interaction in virtual environments can explain the apparently paradoxical effect of greater social/group influence in these domains.

Strictly speaking, anonymity only enhances group identity (and social influence effects) if the group identity is already salient: If individual identity is rendered salient (e.g., by task instructions focusing on individual differences), then anonymity could also reinforce this identity. This idea was demonstrated in an early study (Spears et al. 1990) in which groups polarized most in the direction of a group norm when they were anonymous and group identity was salient but depolarized against the group norm when individual identity was salient.

Greater group influence effects in computer-mediated communication (CMC) compared to FtF interaction have now been replicated and extended in much research (e.g., Chung 2019; Lea et al. 2001, 2007; Lee 2004, 2007, 2008; Postmes et al. 2005; Sassenberg & Boos 2003; Sassenberg & Postmes 2002; Waldzus & Schubert 2000). For example, in one study Lee (2008) showed that whereas people using CMC who were visually identifiable were sensitive to the impact of argument strength, a classic marker of informational influence in persuasion models (e.g., Eagly & Chaiken 1993, Petty & Cacioppo 1986) (see the realm of the other in **Figure 1**), for those who were visually anonymous the impact of argument quality became less important than the impact of group norms. This general finding of stronger group influence under conditions of physical isolation and visual anonymity seems to provide a compelling test of group identity–based influence that contrasts with

the interdependence model of influence, according to which social presence (visibility, proximity) should strengthen interpersonal bonds, accountability, and reciprocity.

There is now considerable evidence that the effect whereby anonymity within the group facilitates group influence occurs via the depersonalization process predicted by SCT and has further positive effects on group solidarity. Specifically, group anonymity increases group salience, group identification, and cohesion (e.g., Lea et al. 2001, Lee 2007); group trust (Tanis & Postmes 2005); the tendency to perceive the collaborative group or dyad as an entity (Sassenberg & Postmes 2002, Tanis & Postmes 2008); and knowledge sharing (Cress 2005). By contrast, individuation and visibility focus attention on the individual contributions made by group members (Lee 2008, Postmes et al. 2001), which can detract from group identity.

All this research points to the idea that, rather than undermining the power of the group, isolation and anonymity seem to strengthen it, especially (as would be expected) among high identifiers. These effects extend beyond social influence to affect cooperative behavior itself. For example, Feng & Ye (2016) examined cooperation in an online community and showed that the perceived anonymity of an online knowledge community directly reinforced a tendency to reciprocate in online groups (as opposed to reducing commitment or even encouraging cheating or free-riding because of the lack of surveillance), and anonymity also strengthened conformity to a prosocial community norm.

This is not to deny that group identity can also emerge from the interpersonal or network relations among group members. The distinction between common-bond and common-identity groups (Prentice et al. 1994) or between inductive (bottom-up) versus deductive (top-down) group formation (Postmes et al. 2005) is relevant here. Interpersonal/network bonds can be an important route to group formation, consistent with the interpersonal realm (**Figure 1**), but the point is that without such bonds people can still have or acquire shared group identities in the absence of (visible) interaction. Interesting questions then arise about when visible or anonymous communication may be more desired or effective, questions that have increasingly been explored in educational settings. This research is still in its infancy, but early research suggests that anonymity can enhance group working (Lea et al. 2002; Postmes et al. 2005; Ren et al. 2007, 2012; Tanis & Postmes 2007).

Another interesting exception to the idea that visual anonymity increases social influence and other group effects is provided by research showing that this effect may also depend on the type of group, or more specifically on group features that can enhance group salience when members are visible. This was examined in the research of Lea et al. (2007) described above, examining social influence variations based on nationality and gender. For many groups that are not visually cued (e.g., Dutch versus British nationality), anonymity should increase the salience of the group identity by obscuring individual variation within the group, in line with the standard cognitive SIDE prediction. However, group identities that are clearly visually cued, such as gender, could become more salient under conditions of visibility. Lea et al. (2007) therefore also varied whether the groups discussed topics anonymously, via CMC, or visibly, via a live webcam. They predicted that group identity–based influence would be higher in anonymous nationality subgroups for nationality-relevant topics (i.e., more intergroup differentiation toward national norms on topics such as "British food is bad"), according to the SIDE model prediction based on the depersonalization process. By contrast, influence in the direction of gender-based norms for gender subgroups (e.g., on "having more sport on TV") was predicted to increase when gender topics were discussed under conditions of visibility because gender is highly visually salient. Predictions were broadly confirmed (Lea et al. 2007).

As noted, the strategic dimension of the SIDE model is less relevant to the (true) social influence process and is more concerned with power relations and whether people feel free to express

their views unconstrained by the potential sanctions of their (out-)group audience (Klein et al. 2007). Both anonymity and the copresence of other in-group members can promote free expression of group normative behavior (by protecting confidentiality and providing social support, respectively), particularly where a standpoint might be punishable by a powerful out-group (Klein et al. 2007, Reicher et al. 1995). For low identifiers, anonymity and isolation might also reduce accountability and the pressure to conform to in-group norms (i.e., normative influence) if this cannot be sanctioned (see Douglas & McGarty 2001). However, the copresence of others may backfire and produce backlash effects once this surveillance is removed (Milovanovic 2020).

There is now also a burgeoning literature on collective action online, which can be analyzed using the SIDE model (both cognitive and strategic aspects) as well as other social identity–related frameworks (e.g., Drury et al. 2020; Van Zomeren et al. 2004, 2008, 2012). Once again, these studies implicate models that go well beyond group identity–based influence, which is the main focus of this review. The main message of this section is that social influence based on group identity is counterintuitive in its effects, because it does not depend on (even implied) presence, as Allport suggested, but is paradoxically often strengthened by isolation and anonymity.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this review I have made the case for group identity–based social influence and argued that it may be more pervasive than we perhaps appreciate. In the process I have distinguished it from other forms of social and group influence, especially normative influence, and reviewed the recent research literature, as well as some classics where ripe for reappraisal. The aim is not to usurp other forms of influence: The integrative framework (**Figure 1**) makes clear these will apply to different levels of identity and focus. However, the emphasis on group identity–based influence offers perhaps also a corrective to the sense (especially common in Western culture) that when it comes to being influenced we like to see ourselves as autonomous individuals, focused on the information, albeit aware of why we sometimes go along to get along. What the research presented in the last section in particular makes clear is that group identity is not some product of its individual building blocks, but the primary foundation for much of our being and behavior. Rather than building the group up from individuals, in the tradition of Lewin and Allport, it is when we strip the individuals away that we get to commune with our group nature, perhaps in its purest form. In the so-called post-truth era, in which one person's facts are another's fake news, it is perhaps more than ever apparent how our grip on reality is defined by our group identities and the sometimes tribal allegiances underlying them (Van Bavel & Pereira 2018). Is individual rationality the antidote that can help us rise above the intergroup melée? Even if it were, it would not stop parties on both sides of whichever intergroup divide from claiming it exclusively as their truth or rationality. And individualism can, after all, also be seen as a culturally contingent group norm (Graupmann et al. 2012, Jetten et al. 2002).

Many interesting research questions remain. One big question concerns the relation between the three realms of influence I outlined at the start, and the scope of each. The history of social psychology has emphasized these realms differentially, with the (inter)personal realm perhaps dominant in the Lewinian era, and the realm of the other coming to the fore in the information processing age. Note that I resisted denoting the latter as the realm of informational influence, and for good reason. If Turner were alive he would doubtless say that there is no such thing as pure information without a social (or group) dimension, so one continuing debate will be the scope of social influence based on group identity. Whether being influenced by rabbits reflects a group identity process is open to debate, but group identity arguably lies at the heart of much social influence we might not even recognize as such.

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