

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The New Moral Power of Minorities

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The model of three interrelated social entities proposed by Gabriel Mugny to account for the role of active minorities in social innovation and change retains all its relevance and heuristic value (cf. Mugny, 1982). However, the fight of the civil rights movements of the '60s transformed the moral perspective from which the majority regards their own behaviors towards social minorities. This resulted in an immorality judgment of discriminatory attitudes and behaviors that had long been regarded as natural. Thus a change has been effected on the relationships between majority and minority groups, providing minorities with a new moral power. As a result of such a new moral representation of persecuted minorities, a new category of minorities – victimized minorities – has appeared. In this paper two studies are reviewed comparing the influence of victimized minorities and 'classical' active minorities. Those studies show that victimized minorities attain more manifest influence than active minorities, while active minorities effect greater latent change on the representation of the minority group.

Keywords: active minorities; victimized minorities; collective guilt; social conflict; social influence

The Model of the Power of Minorities

On the occasion of the visit of the Iranian president, Hassan Rohani, to Paris, an activist from the international women's rights movement *Femen*, with her chest painted with the Iranian flag, staged a mock execution, hanging from a bridge in Paris, as a banner hung from the bridge above her, reading 'Welcome Rohani, executioner of freedom'. It was a protest against the hanging of homosexuals, the stoning of adulteresses, and the hundreds of death sentences imposed every year in Iran to feminists or freethinkers accused of criticizing a theocratic regime. According to *Femen* sources, the acrobat has been charged by French police of 'sexual exhibitionism'. Taking into account the interest of French government in this visit, *Femen* stresses that market trades should not be superior to human rights. The organization states that 'Francois Hollande doesn't care about human rights. The only thing he cares about is business. Shame on Francois Hollande. Shame on Hassan Rohani' (cf. Logan, 2016).

This sort of act confirms that the model of three interrelated social entities proposed by Gabriel Mugny (1982) to account for the social role of minorities and their potential to trigger social innovation and change retains all its relevance and heuristic value – an active *minority*, in a conflicting relationship of antagonism with power, attempts to influence a majority of *population* that *power* tries to subjugate. There is in the above referred protest

an example of an *active minority* that defines a *political relationship* of antagonism with power. Their behavior, as well as the socio-political conflict triggered by it, seeks to change the status quo and to force institutional powers to legislate and act in order to secure elementary human rights. Such active minorities also define an *influence relationship* with the general population, the majority. They rely on actions and communication styles aimed at making the population aware of the violation of basic human rights incurred by the ruling powers.

However, a substantial historical change has also taken place since Mugny's earlier research – a change that will be described throughout this paper as the development of a new moral representation of minority discrimination. Such societal change has enabled minority groups to deploy a whole new set of influence strategies to negotiate their relationships with social majorities – strategies that aim to elicit collective guilt and to obtain compensation rather than deepening the aforementioned political relationship of antagonism with the majority. Revisiting Mugny's pioneering contribution to the field of minority influence nowadays requires an analysis of such major cultural change and its implications for contemporary relationships between majority and minority social groups. That is the purpose of this paper.

A Change in Relationships with Minority Groups

In contemporary Western societies, the well-known civil rights movement of the '60s represents a golden era of active minorities (Moscovici, 1976). The battle against racism, sexism, militarism, or environmental degrada-

tion changed laws and established new majority norms that have eventually transformed racial, gender or even international relationships. Although some studies (cf. Mugny and Pérez, 1989; Butera, Levine, and Vernet, 2009) suggest that the role of active minorities in bringing about change may have been underappreciated, it is to their credit that the population and the ruling powers became finally aware that discrimination against different groups was a violation of the most basic principle in a self-proclaimed democratic society – the principle of equality among human beings (Myrdal, 1944).

The earlier experimental paradigms designed in the '70s by Gabriel Mugny (for a summary see Mugny, 1982) were entirely attuned with these pro civil rights movements, as they sought to examine psychosocial processes underlying different behavioral and communicative styles through which minorities might change attitudes towards a variety of issues – militarism (e.g., 'Soldiers, turn your rifles against your officers'), xenophobia (e.g., grant equal rights to both foreign and Swiss workers) or environmental pollution (e.g., criticisms to the irresponsible use of polluting detergents by housewives) among others. Forty years later, a summary balance on the incidence of such diverse active minorities shows an *almost total conversion* regarding some of those issues and a *partial conversion* regarding others, as it will be argued throughout the following sections.

Among those issues targeted by minority groups in the '60s and '70s, the environmental cause may be mentioned as one of the (few) instances of almost total majority conversion (Butera, Levine, and Vernet, 2009). For some time now, support of the environmentalist movement has been strong. For instance, an inquiry carried out within the European Value Survey in 1989–1990 with a sample of 2000 Swiss and 1510 Spanish participants showed that 87.9% of Swiss and 96.1% of Spanish citizens approve of the ecology movement or nature protection (EVS, 2014). Nevertheless, as usual, general pro-environmental attitudes seem to outdistance legislation – an observation that indirectly confirms predictions of an interactionist theoretical model arguing that social change stems from a bottom-up process rather than a top-down one (Moscovici, 1976).

However, the most remarkable point in such a balance regards the *partial conversion* in the big issues of social discrimination of minority groups – racism, xenophobia, homophobia, and sexism. It would have to be characterized as an unfulfilled conversion because, even if pro civil rights minorities have triggered a significant shift in public attitudes towards them, they have failed to change the somewhat subtle social relationships that perpetuate discrimination (cf. Bonilla-Silva, 2014). This partial conversion is labeled by some as 'a modern paradox' (O'Brien, Crandall, Horstman-Reser, Warner, Alsbrooks, and Blodorn, 2010), as 'modern racism' (McConahay, 1983), as 'benevolent sexism' (Glick and Fiske, 1997), as 'symbolic racism' (Sears, 1988), or as 'implicit prejudice' (Banaji and Greenwald, 2013).

Normative Change vs. Immobility of Representations of Minorities

According to the theory of social influence and innovation, a hypothesis can be advanced that social change in minority issues requires more than a change in attitudes, norms, or even values – it requires a change of mentality about social minorities, i.e., a change of social representations or folk knowledge developed over centuries regarding heterodox minority groups that stand in opposition to social and cultural orthodoxy (Moscovici, 1975). Partial conversion becomes particularly evident in a double standard. Some everyday practices and relationships of members of each minority with the corresponding majority (blacks with whites, Gypsies with Gadge, women with men, homosexuals with heterosexuals, immigrants with autochthons) seem nowadays to be guided in the public sphere by egalitarian, non-discriminatory norms (cf. Crandall, Eshleman, and O'Brien, 2002; Gabarrot & Falomir-Pichastor, 2017). However, social representations and prejudices anchored in long-held ingroup social and cultural traditions would appear to underlie relationships and practices regarding the private sphere, intimate interactions, or biological reproduction with a minority member. In other words, there would be both a significant change in non-discriminatory norms regulating public social relations and a remarkable resistance to private relationships free of old-fashioned prejudice, to intimate contact or to miscegenation (e.g., Brito, 2016). In spite of the credit that civil rights movements in the '60s deserve for a change in the norms of public coexistence, themata underlying social representations of minority groups appear to remain relatively unchanged (Pérez, 2014).

Themata are "pseudo-conceptual" kernel elements – archetypes of ordinary reasoning or "pre-conceptions" established over the *longue durée* [that] generally take the form of notions anchored in systems of oppositions' (Moscovici and Vignaux, 2000: 179, emphases in the original). Such themata 'are presumed or evident in the culture of a group, so that its members may nor even spell them out in communication. They underlie the content, notions, images, and meanings that are just about to become socially shared. They also seem to have a generative as well as a normative power in the formation of a representation, fitting "new" information to the already existing one' (Moscovici, 2001: 31).

Thus there is a specific representational field regarding each of the minority groups in which their minority identity is constructed. Contents of themata underlying social representations held by the majority are specific and stem from their dialectical relationship with each minority group. For instance, even if machismo is regarded as immoral as racism, nevertheless sexism and racism are anchored in different themata. Themata influencing the relationships of the majority with each minority group happen to be one of the main obstacles to fight discrimination and derogatory behavior towards them. Let us review a couple of examples.

The persistence of discrimination against minorities
Machismo. After the Second World War, and particularly after feminist movement in the '60s (e.g., women's lib), an

extension of democratic principles to both sexes can be noticed, resulting in more gender equality in civil rights and more emancipation of women (Barnett and Hyde, 2001). Such a shift is particularly remarkable in those countries where the feminist movement has been more active.

Thus, large differences between countries regarding gender equality are shown in a variety of reports from international organizations such as Amnesty International (Amnesty International, 2017), the United Nations Development Programme on Human Development (UNDP, 2010), the Global Gender Gap Report (World Economic Forum, 2015) or data from the European Value Survey (EVS, 2014). Active feminist movements that try to promote equality in different countries face all kinds of political, social, and cultural opposition – in particular, persistence of a patriarchal culture assumed by both men and women on the one hand and restrictions to freedom of speech on the other hand.

An index of difference between countries in a patriarchal culture that endows men with more rights than women can be found in the results of representative polls carried out between 2005 and 2014 under the European Value Survey in 78 countries ($N = 157,272$). There the following question was asked: *'Many things may be desirable, but not all of them are essential characteristics of democracy. Please tell how essential you think it is as a characteristic of democracy that "Women have the same rights as men"'*. In a response scale ranging from 1 = *'Not at all an essential characteristic of democracy'* to 10 = *'Definitely an essential characteristic of democracy'*, the sample generally regards equality of rights between men and women as an essential characteristic of democracy ($M = 8.14$, $ST = 2.50$). However, data also show highly significant differences between citizens of different countries in the survey.¹ Means range from 4.85 in Bahrain to 9.70 in Sweden. Overall, women show a stronger agreement ($N = 97822$, $M = 8.29$, $ST = 2.41$) than men ($N = 77315$, $M = 7.98$, $ST = 2.58$; $F(1,157134) = 612.35$, $p < 0.00001$). In spite of such main effect of gender, the ranking of differences between countries replicates almost exactly in both women and men subsamples. Moreover, in 38 of the 78 countries there are no significant differences between the response of men and women to that question. Some of those countries with a high degree of consensus between men and women also score below average in the importance given to gender equality as a characteristic of democracy – such is the case of Kuwait, Nigeria, Qatar, India, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, Philippines, Zambia, Thailand, Colombia, Pakistan, Ecuador, Hong Kong, and Japan. In those countries, women themselves agree with men in regarding gender equality as a not-so-important characteristic of democracy, reflecting their internalization of a patriarchal culture. Active feminist movements promoting gender equality are likely to meet a stronger opposition in those countries than in countries where women show a stronger awareness of how essential gender equality is for democracy.

Further examination of data shown in footnote 1 might lead to the conclusion that, in France and most Western

countries, discrimination against women is an issue that has been overcome and that active minorities fighting it have achieved their goals. However, the truth is that, in spite of such data, gender-based prejudice has not disappeared, not even in Western countries. Research using measures of subtle sexism such as the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick and Fiske, 1997) shows that gender-based prejudice is nowadays expressed in less direct ways (Faure & Ndobu, 2015; Wagner-Guillermou, Bourguignon & Tisserant, 2015). Moreover, many different kinds of data reveal the persistence of discrimination and derogation of women (e.g., Gutsell and Remedios, 2016; Hammond, Overall, and Cross, 2016; Hernandez, Redersdorff, and Martinot, 2015; Hideg and Ferris, 2016).

For instance, returning again to the introductory case of this paper, just a week after the Iranian president's visit to Paris, the front page of French journal *Le Monde* reported some figures of gender-based violence in France – although any other Western country could be taken as an example and results would not be better (cf. Páez, Pérez, Navarro-Pertusa, and Fernández, 2004; Report Daphné, 2007). Briefly stated, 134 women were murdered by their partners in 2014; an annual average of 223,000 women were victims of physical or sexual violence (70% of them on a regular basis) by their present or former partners; and 84,000 women a year experience rape, rape attempts, or other kind of abuse, performed by a close male in 90% of the cases. Such figures illustrate the fact that social influence of active feminist minorities fighting discrimination against women is far from having achieved a significant reduction of gender-based violence. Minority groups such as *Femen* still have substantial room (of their own) for social change. These and similar data suggest that, even if active minorities have achieved a social change regarding their relationships with the ruling powers, they have still failed to change everyday practices adopted by the majority of the population regarding their private interactions with members of the minority category (e.g., Bate, 2014).

Páez et al. (2004), in their analysis regarding social representations of women, focused on the themata of the culture of honor – representations of male honor and female chastity, anchored in a patriarchal worldview, that would still provide a guide for everyday practices. Western culture would rather believe that such a mentality is just a marginal remainder, but data show otherwise. While women's liberation has doubtlessly increased (e.g., Barnett and Hyde, 2001), the culture of honor has not been changed yet. The conflict between both worldviews (women's liberation vs. culture of honor) accounts for a significant part of uxoricides and violence performed by male partners, suggesting a partial conversion (Páez et al., 2004). Consistent with our theoretical approach, Páez et al. (2004) suggest that the issue of violence against women does not belong in the classical debate of the relationship between attitudes and behavior, but in research about social representations, folk knowledge affecting everyday interactions between majority and minority members.

Racism. Our self-proclaimed democratic societies appear to be reproducing a dynamic of social discrimination that a majority of the population condemns and that

blatantly contradicts their most basic democratic ideals. Another case example of this gap between the normative, legal and attitudinal shift and the representations affecting everyday relationships between majority and minority members can be found in racism.

For more than four centuries now, relationships between black people (minority) and white people (majority) stand as a cardinal issue in the foundation of societies such as the United States. Such relationships have evolved according to a democratic worldview. One of the most thorough studies available on contemporary evolution of racial attitudes in the USA (Schuman, Steeh, Bobo, and Krysan, 1997) shows that since the '40s, attitudes of white people have shifted toward egalitarianism and non-discrimination in mainstream USA in a variety of issues. A significant change can be observed in attitudes and opinions about residential integration, educational integration, employment equity, desegregation in public places, welfare benefits for black people, or intermarriage legislation.

Among the conditions that may have fostered such a massive shift of white people's attitudes towards black people, Schuman et al. (1997) also point to the crucial influence of the Civil Rights Movement in the '50s and '60s. From the point of view of minority influence, it was a paradigmatic movement in two senses. First, because of their influence on the ruling powers, as changes in legislation do prove (school desegregation achieved in 1954, or constitutional abolition of the ban against intermarriage in 1967). Second, because of their influence in the population, as shown in normative changes – manifest racism is frowned upon by a majority of the population – as well as in the aforementioned shift in opinions and attitudes about discrimination against blacks in a variety of issues.

All these changes would lead us to conclude that racism is no longer the societal issue that it was until the '60s. However, Schuman et al. (1997: 306) conclude that, while 'we are dealing with a fundamental transformation of social norms', nevertheless, 'it would be as simplistic to regard such a sweeping change as mere "lip service" as to take at face value all pro-integration responses given in surveys' (Schuman et al., 1997: 306).

According to these authors, 'What has changed over the past half century is the normative definition of appropriate relations between blacks and whites. Whereas discrimination against, and enforcement segregation of, black Americans were taken for granted by most white Americans as recently as the World War II years, today the norm holds that black Americans deserve the same treatment and respect as whites' (Schuman et al., 1997: 311–312). But a pervasive gap between norms or attitudes against discrimination and everyday implementation of egalitarian principles is indeed shown in different studies (e.g., Hacker, 1992; Bonilla-Silva, 2014). Black minority is still discriminated in almost every sphere of daily life such as workplaces, colleges, neighborhoods, business, employment, or hiring processes.

Demographers often regard intermarriage as one of the best evidences of the relationship between races and the effect of ethnic and racial prejudices (Kalmijn and Van Tubergen, 2010; Quian, 2005). In societies that are

structured by racial prejudice, marriage between blacks and whites epitomizes a radical erosion of social order in the eyes of the majority.

Many surveys suggest a remarkable shift in opinions and attitudes towards miscegenation. For example, comparative polls by Gallup show that, while in 1968 only 17% of whites and 56% of blacks approved of intermarriage, in 2009 interracial marriage reached 85% of approval among whites and 95% among blacks. Moreover, a change in behaviors can also be noticed – in 1960 marriages between a black and a white person made up 0.13% of marriages in the US, while such percentage had risen to 0.60% in 2000 and to 0.75% in 2010.

However, intermarriage rates still suggest that race is a more powerful predictor of matching than other ethnic or national factors. A review of data from the last three US censuses (1990, 2000, 2010) shows that the intermarriage rate between whites and blacks is significantly lower than the intermarriage rate between whites and any other ethnic minority (Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Americans). Moreover, cohabiting couples (vs. married couples) make up 30% of total white/black couples, while they only make up 15% of couples between whites and any other ethnic minority (Hispanics, Asian Americans, Native Americans). Cohabitation has long been regarded as a response to social barriers and to lack of support from family and friends – cohabitation (vs. marriage) would be chosen to avoid trouble that might arise from gathering together families or friends with different racial or ethnic backgrounds (Goldstein and Harknett, 2006).

Such a pervasive gap has often been attributed to the issue of attitude-behavior relationship. More than three decades ago, Crosby, Bromley, and Saxe (1980: 557) concluded that 'Discriminatory behavior is more prevalent in the body of unobtrusive studies than we might expect on the basis of survey data'. Hundreds of later studies on unconscious, implicit prejudice confirm their conclusion, particularly those developed within the IAT paradigm (see Banaji and Greenwald, 2013, for a summary). In a similar direction, Gaertner and Dovidio (1986), with their notion of aversive racism, argue that whites tend to accept egalitarian norms while their underlying negative feeling towards blacks remains unchanged, so that when an egalitarian norm is clearly explicit in an interaction situation they show no trace of racism, but when there is no such clear norm their behavior is more discriminatory. Meanwhile, Bobo and Zubrinsky (1996) assert that normative and attitudinal change of whites toward blacks has taken place in the public rather than in the private sphere.

However, our conclusion is that an attitudinal explanation is not enough, and that theoretical accounts should focus on long-held social representations about blacks that still remain unchanged despite the effort of active minorities and that constitute an essential guidance for white people's everyday behavior.

In an excellent book on the subject, Romano (2003) shows how families, communities, and other social institutions try to enforce traditions, prejudices, and social representations against intermarriage, consistent with the taboo of miscegenation (Pérez, 2006; Pérez, Moscovici,

and Chulvi, 2007). Also a variety of studies in social psychology appear to confirm the hypothesis proposed by Jahoda (1999), according to which images of 'the other' as animal, primitive, or savage would not be historical hold-overs that are already past and overcome. Such images are still lingering nowadays, providing inspiration for racist behavior (Pérez, Moscovici, and Chulvi, 2007). For instance, Goff, Eberhardt, Williams, and Jackson (2008) managed to show, in a set of experiments with American students, an implicit association between African Americans and monkeys. Such an association would not appear with other wild animals, but only with monkeys. Moreover, the strength of the association was not correlated to manifest racial attitudes nor to participants' motivation to control expression of prejudice. Other studies also suggest that prejudice toward ethnic minorities such as Gypsies or blacks may well go beyond a simple negative attitude 'to include essentialist beliefs that group members are by nature aggressive, uncontrolled, hypersexual, and brutish. Having an implicit basis, these beliefs may be activated beneath awareness and produce harsh and dehumanizing treatment of group members when triggered' (Saminaden, Loughnan, and Haslam, 2010: 13). Taken together these studies suggest that contemporary ethnic prejudice, despite moral pressure against its manifest expression, does not escape the influence of hegemonic representations of the concerned ethnic minorities. There is a strong suggestion that a biologized social representation of black people anchored in the themata of *scala naturae* is still dominant (Pérez, 2014).

The Emergent Moral Representation of Minority Discrimination

Machismo and racism have been used here to illustrate the pervasive gap between norms, attitudes, and opinions that pretend to cherish what is in fact rejected at the level of social representations and daily practices. A similar case may be argued regarding social relationships between the majority and other minority groups such as Gypsies, Native Americans and aboriginals, homosexuals, or *new-autochthons* in different European countries where the legal principle of *ius solis* grants immigrants' offspring a nationality their parents cannot obtain.

The fight of the civil rights movements helped to shape a new relationship between majority and minorities through abstract normative principles. It led the majority of the population to accept the democratic principles established in the Declaration of Human Rights as a normative guide (Doise, 2002) and thus to acknowledge themselves as a source of sexist, xenophobic, and racial prejudices that were no longer regarded as right or natural. In so doing, it transformed the moral perspective from which the majority looks at their own attitudes and behaviors regarding social minorities, previously embedded in blatant manifest prejudice.

As a result, a new moral power has been bestowed on minority groups – the power to make both the ruling powers and the social majority aware of the contradiction entailed by upholding democratic ideals while behaving according to traditional normative systems that

undermine such ideals. Such a new ethical sensibility results in prejudice being qualified as a moral flaw on the part of the holder. Therefore, in recent decades not only the expression of stereotypes and prejudices is considered old-fashioned, but whoever shows them appears 'as a morally inferior human being' (Jones, 1997: 42).

This emergent qualification as immoral of discriminatory attitudes and behaviors that had long been regarded as natural is one of the most significant changes induced by the civil rights movement in the moral representation of social discrimination. From then on, one of the main motivations for the majority will be to preserve an unblemished moral identity. And, given the social interdependence between the majority and minority groups, whenever a minority gets unfair treatment a feeling of guilt will be aroused in the majority, as it will be argued below. Thus the majority's concern about their unblemished moral identity is one of the factors enabling the emergent moral power of minority groups.

A new ethical and legal paradigm fuelling the moral power of minorities

Besides the increasingly widespread Declaration of Human Rights (D'Amato, 1995), after the Second World War two legal innovations appeared that would have a huge impact in minority groups and thus in our whole Western societies. On the one hand, the acceptance in 1948 of the legal qualification of genocide as a crime against humanity represents an extension of the very notion of rights from the individual to the group. But the notion of group rights entails the notion of collective group responsibilities and thus, by virtue of a metaphysical extension, the possibility of group guilt. In this way, a new ethical condition of 'guilty by association' would be born – i.e., guilty not because of the subject's individual actions, but guilty by virtue of his identity, of his membership in the same group as the perpetrator. The legal paradigm of individual responsibility shifts to an ethical paradigm of collective responsibility and guilt.

On the other hand, non-prescriptibility of crime against humanity entails the duty of collective memory. Intended or not, both these innovations in the prosecution of murder of minority groups have resulted in subordination of the legal paradigm to an ethical paradigm. Within the classic legal paradigm only the individual is accountable for his own actions – never for others' actions – and even those offenses prescribe in a certain time span. But within the new social ethical paradigm the possibility exists that an individual may/must assume responsibility for acts performed by other people linked to him by virtue of kinship or social identity. Moreover, in the ethical paradigm the non-prescriptibility of crime allows for assessment of diachronic relationships between majority and minority, for implementation of retrospective justice, for the legitimacy of applying new norms, values and principles to assess the (im)morality of past actions and behaviors, however anachronistic such a retrospective judgment may be. This emergent legal and ethical culture is a second factor that has transformed majority/minority relationships, boosting the moral power of minority groups.

Collective guilt and request for forgiveness

As it has been argued, post-civil rights movement era may be characterized as an era of minority discrimination without discriminators (Moscovici and Pérez, 2007; Bonilla-Silva, 2014). However, membership in social categories such as white, male, Western, Gadge, metropolitan, or autochthon entails association with dominant groups that have demonstrably abused minorities that contemporary norms dictate should be treated according to democratic principles of social justice and equality. Under such permanent suspicion, governments, institutions and members of those majorities are compelled to show they have nothing to do with their ancestors' prejudice or wrongdoing regarding certain minorities, thus encouraging an increasing interest in acts of historical reconstruction of moral identity (e.g., Branscombe and Doosje, 2004). One of the ways to put behind a history that contemporary society regards as immoral is to admit their ancestors' mistake, condemn their actions and ask for forgiveness (Barkan, 2000). Such a contrition act also conveys the message that the ancestors' wrongdoings will never happen again.

From the '80s on, quite a lot of governments, institutions and organizations have found it suitable asking for forgiveness about a variety of injustices inflicted upon minority groups in the past. It should suffice remembering Nietzschean take on morals (Nietzsche, 1887) to realize that the Catholic Church's leading role in such a new strategy of contrition and purification of historical memory may not be irrelevant at all. Italian journalist Accattoli (1998) has reported in a book the nearly one hundred occasions when Pope John Paul II asked for forgiveness on behalf of his Church. His first 'mea culpa' was pronounced in 1982 regarding the outrages of the Inquisition, and in 1984 regarding the excesses of the missionaries; in 1987 he acknowledged the participation of Christians in destroying indigenous cultures; in 1995 he described Crusades as 'an error' and he asked for forgiveness regarding Catholic mistakes against ecumenism. In 1995 he asked for forgiveness regarding the Catholic Church's position against women's rights. In 1997 his request for forgiveness regarded 'the attitude' of some Christians during Nazism. He also expressed repentance about the Catholic Church's position on scientific theories such as Galileo's heliocentrism. It should be highlighted that this an entirely new phenomenon – never in two thousand years of existence had forgiveness been requested.

Such contrition and memory purification acts can also be found in a variety of governments and civil organizations. For instance, in 1995 Queen Elizabeth II asked for the forgiveness of New Zealand Maori peoples for having appropriated their land in the 19th century. In 1998 the Canadian government formally requested forgiveness for the historical mistreatment of Native Americans. In 1999 the Australian prime minister asked for forgiveness regarding the mistreatment of aboriginal peoples. In 1998 the president of France asked for forgiveness regarding the 'judiciary error' in the Dreyfus case. Meanwhile, the Red Cross asked for forgiveness in 1995 regarding its 'moral failure' for not having denounced Nazi atrocities

during the Second World War. In 2000 the Norwegian government asked for the forgiveness of Gypsies because of decades of oppression, abuse, and misery. There is a long etcetera of governments and cases (cf. Howard-Hassmann, 2014).

The descendants of minority groups have also changed strategy to fit in this new ethical-legal paradigm. A remarkable case happened in the UN Conference against Racism in Durban, South Africa, in 2001. There several African and Caribbean countries required that former colonialist powers and States admitted to their guilt in slave trade and paid a financial compensation. A group of African representatives actually established the amount in 25,000 million dollars and proposed that a part of it should be paid through external debt forgiveness. In the Durban conference it was argued that slavery should be remembered not only as a terrible tragedy, but also as a usurpation that deprived Africa for centuries of their human and natural resources, preventing its development until now. In response to such requirements, the United Kingdom and the Netherlands declared that they acknowledged the abominable nature of slavery, they were sorry about that stage in history and they *apologized* for it. Germany did formally require *forgiveness*. France went even further and it was the first Western country to acknowledge through a law in 2001 that 'slavery and slave trade are a *crime* against humanity'. Anyway, no financial compensation was granted because the EU representatives explicitly opposed it.

According to this emergent victimhood culture, a number of companies (railway, cotton) in the USA have faced compensation claims for profiteering from slave work in the past. For example, in 2000 American insurance company AETNA asked for forgiveness regarding profiteering from slave insurance policies in 1850.

Minority Discrimination and Moral Conflict

This new victimhood culture has not only changed the relationships of the ruling powers with minority groups, but it has also established new ways of relationship between majority and minorities. On the part of the majority, their main concern will be to avoid the moral blemish entailed by minority discrimination. On the part of the minority, their concern will focus on the acknowledgment of their past and present condition of victims.

The strength of this new majority motivation was tested in a set of experiments about attitudes toward Gypsies in Spain that showed a 'paradoxical effect of discrimination' (Pérez, Mugny, Llavata, and Fierres, 1993). In that study, a sample of Gadge University students were led to show discriminatory behavior toward Gypsies through a variety of experimental manipulations, having previously found that they were reluctant to do so. For example, in one condition they were asked to choose three traits out of a list of five, all of them negative. In another condition, they were asked to amend grammar and spelling mistakes in a written text attributed to a Gypsy source. The majority norm was also manipulated, suggesting that a majority of University students had either a positive or a negative view of Gypsies.

Effects of experimental manipulations compelling participants to discriminate against Gypsies were measured on two dependent variables – i.e., a scale of *manifest attitudes* toward Gypsies, made up of statements reflecting a clear evaluative stand toward Gypsies and segregation (e.g., ‘Gypsies should be forced to live like their neighbors do’); and a second scale of *latent attitudes* toward Gypsies, made up of statements that were more descriptive than evaluative in the eyes of the respondents, thus revealing underlying representations of the minority group (e.g., ‘Gypsies feel less concerned than Gadge by contemporary political issues’).

The most relevant results suggest that students avoided assigning negative characteristics to Gypsies as much as they could, and that their *manifest attitudes* (e.g., ‘More political and social actions are needed to improve Gypsies’ welfare’) significantly shifted according to the majority norm. But the most intriguing result was that the more they discriminated against Gypsies when they were led to think that a majority of population disapproved of Gypsies’ discrimination, the more they shifted toward a positive representation of Gypsies in the *latent attitude* scale.

The latent attitude scale, besides appearing more ‘neutral’ than the manifest scale regarding evaluation of Gypsies, also had an interesting feature – all its items assumed an implicit causal attribution according to which guilt of discrimination and social inferiority would lie in Gypsies themselves due to their lack of achievement motivation (for instance, another item of the latent scale read ‘Gypsies are less concerned about technological progress than Gadge’). In this way, this scale may be regarded as a measure of the degree of attribution of responsibility to Gypsies.

Results suggest that when participants were led to show a discriminatory behavior toward Gypsies and it was explicitly suggested that a majority of the reference group was not racist against Gypsies, then an eventual awareness of their racist behavior induced a socio-moral conflict in the participants that was resolved by shifting to more positive latent attitudes toward Gypsies. The phenomenon was labeled as ‘the discrimination paradox’ because the more the majority group members were led to discriminate against Gypsies, the less they explained the social conditions of Gypsies by internal attribution to Gypsies themselves in a subsequent measurement.

Such a moral conflict would have been unlikely without the changes in moral representations of racism and discrimination described above. Before the civil rights movement general social discrimination (i.e., racism, sexism, homophobia) were so naturalized that a moral judgment of wrongness or unfairness would not even arise. It is the aforementioned change in moral representations that would cause such behaviors to be experienced as morally wrong and thus as a blemish in the moral identity of the actor.

The influence on population of victimized vs. active minorities

However, this emergent victimhood framework also provides minorities with the option of relying on a different

behavioral style in their interactions with the majority so as to influence them. The new strategy aims at being perceived as a victimized minority (Moscovici and Pérez, 2007), trying to obtain acknowledgment as a victim of past or present discrimination. And, according to Sullivan, Landau, Branscombe, and Rothschild (2012: 779), ‘in the modern cultural sphere, belonging to a group that perpetrates negative acts against a victim group can induce a distressing moral identity threat, whereas belonging to a victimized group may induce a sense of high moral status’.

Thus, a new moral power entailed by their recognition as victims is nowadays bestowed upon minority groups that were once regarded as marginal, deviated, or anomic by the majority and the ruling powers. In other words, the transformation in moral representations of social discrimination has resulted in two significant changes regarding majority/minority relationships. On the part of the majority, the new ethical-legal paradigm of collective guilt (Barkan, 2000; Branscombe and Doosje, 2004); on the other part – and dialectically related to it – the emergence of new victimized minorities (Moscovici and Pérez, 2007).

In a couple of studies (Moscovici and Pérez, 2007) the nature of the influence exerted by victimized minorities, as compared to ‘classic’ active minorities, was examined. Participants had to read a report on the history of Gypsy persecution in Europe. For the victimized minority condition, the report was attributed to a Gypsy representative, and its last paragraph read ‘We wonder – should not we Gypsies seek compensation from the State, given that this society has inflicted such grave sufferings on us in the past and continues to make us suffer?’ In the active minority condition, the report was attributed to a Gypsy Political Party, and it ended with ‘We wonder – should we Gypsies not mobilize and fight actively until we achieve a radical change in this society, which has persecuted us so grievously and continues to persecute us?’ Results showed that an ethical relationship is established with the victimized minority, whereas the active minority arouses an antagonistic relationship and thus an external conflict with the majority. Compared to active minorities, victimized minorities elicit more guilt within the majority, a greater moral conflict, and they obtain more favorable attitudes toward compensation of Gypsies for past wrongdoings (e.g., ‘Special rights must be granted to Gypsies to erase memory of this horrible past’). Meanwhile, active minorities elicit a socio-political conflict that entails more manifest reluctance to compensate minorities for past wrongdoings, but they induce a larger positive shift in latent attitudes (e.g., lower scores in items such as ‘Gypsies are less concerned about technological progress in our society than Gadge’ – the same scale was used as in Pérez et al., 1993) and internal attribution becomes a less suitable explanation for the status quo of Gypsies – that is, an active Gypsy minority is less likely to be regarded as guilty and deserving their own historical destiny than a victimized Gypsy minority.

Victimized minorities fail to convert the majority – Gadge feel guilty regarding historical persecution of Gypsies and they are more likely to admit to the need of compensation measures, but they still stick to the

representation that Gypsies live in social marginality because they lack self-improvement motivation. Such a social explanation results in a reduction of the moral conflict that would arouse in Gadge with the awareness of Gypsies' misery. Meanwhile, active minorities, through their appeal to a conflicting socio-political rhetoric, do not allow for such a dominant victimizing representation about Gypsies. In the short term, victimized minorities may obtain some benefit – some compensation is granted by the ruling powers or the population – but in the long term the majority sticks to the belief that the misery experienced by minority group members is due to their lack of effort to change their reality and their destiny.

Conclusion

For three decades now we have witnessed the emergence of a new category of minorities – victimized minorities. Nazi genocide somewhat established a no-return point in the ethical and legal interpretation that the power and the population make of the persecution to death of minority groups. In Judeo-Christian tradition, suffering and sacrifice have long been a requirement for redemption. But never before had such an ethical and moral representation been applied to persecuted minorities. The issue is then if the acknowledgment of collective guilt, repentance and eventual compensation constitute a strong enough warrant to ensure that minorities will never be persecuted again. Our small experiments suggest that this may not be the case. Faced with victimized minorities, the majority feels guilty, they are ready to request forgiveness and grant a compensation, but their representation of minorities remains unchanged, resulting in a perception of victimized minorities that lies responsibility for their situation upon them.

All in all, the argument developed in this paper suggests that active minorities should not only continue striving to change the legal power that rules population behavior, but also focus their efforts on the transformation of those themata – subscribed by the majority – that are still guiding private everyday relationships, intimate contact and interaction, and particularly the taboo regarding contact and miscegenation with minority group members. And, as it has long been suggested by conversion theory on minority influence, the attributes of power (political power, moral power) might not be the best way to achieve such a private, intimate influence (Moscovici, 1980).

Gabriel Mugny has devoted a significant part of his impressive trajectory as a systematic and conscientious researcher to examine social innovation processes, to emancipate minority groups from attitudes and norms that naturalize their oppression. It appears that the themata leading to minority exclusion are still an issue in future research agendas. We might not yet clearly envision how to remove them, but at least Gabriel provides us with the heuristic devices required to acknowledge their existence and their role in organizing the relationships among majority, power and minorities.

Note

¹ *Rank of average scores of surveyed countries, ordered from lowest to highest:* Bahrain, Palestine, Iraq, Libya, Kuwait, Singapore, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Qatar, Lebanon, Azerbaijan, Jordan, Yemen, Malaysia, Tunisia, India, Algeria, Kyrgyzstan, South Africa, Belarus, Philippines, Egypt, Rwanda, Zambia, Iran, Morocco, Thailand, Armenia, Hong Kong, Pakistan, South Korea, Mali, Colombia, Ecuador, Japan, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Ghana, Mexico, USA, Burkina Faso, Turkey, Ukraine, Brazil, France, Chile, Uruguay, Cyprus, Serbia-Montenegro, Estonia, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, Uzbekistan, Georgia, Bulgaria, Moldova, Russia, Taiwan, New Zealand, China, Slovenia, Spain, Poland, Argentina, Netherlands, Australia, Ethiopia, Hungary, UK, Romania, Canada, Germany, Finland, Vietnam, Norway, Switzerland, Andorra, Sweden.

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Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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