In this paper, I will propose an articulation of minority influence research (Pérez & Mugny, 1986) with Honneth’s work on recognition (1996). Drawing upon the German philosopher’s theory, I contend that conflictual social relations between majorities and minorities originate from denials of recognition that tap the diverse forms of modern prejudice and discrimination (Sanchez-Mazas, 2004). This perspective has been used as a general framework into which we have integrated social psychological approaches of prejudice and recent empirical findings (Licata, Sanchez-Mazas & Green, 2011). Holding prejudiced attitudes towards ethnic minorities or immigrants is one of various ways of denying them recognition. The targets of prejudice and discrimination are therefore to be categorized as outgroups from the majority viewpoint, since these groups – ethnic minorities, immigrants or people of immigrant descent, asylum seekers – do not benefit the rights and/or esteem that are granted by default to majority members. This is of particular interest for a conceptualization of outgroup minority influence framed in terms of struggle for recognition within diverse historical contexts.

Minority Influence and Intergroup Relations
Taking a societal perspective, I will disentangle the notion of social influence, which comprises minority and majority influence, from the study of attitude change (Eagly & Chaiken 1984, 1993; Petty & Cacioppo, 1981; Yzerbyt & Corneille, 1994). This distinction seems relevant since the study of influence processes aims not only at accounting for individuals’ receptiveness or resistance to attempts at modifying their attitudes, but, more broadly, at providing explanations of social change that involve subjective factors, notably collective action and innovation stemming from active minorities (Butera, Falomir-Pichastor, Mugny & Quiamzade, 2017; Moscovici, 1976; Moscovici, Mugny & Van Avermaet, 1985). More precisely, I will reappraise a historical controversial issue of outgroup minority influence that was running through the ’80s and ’90s, in order to stress the political and societal significance of Mugny’s view of minority persuasion as stemming from conflicts of viewpoints, rather than ingroup allegiances (Mugny, 1982; Mugny & Pérez, 1991). The former can be considered as representative of the genetic model of minority influence (Moscovici & Ricateau, 1972; Moscovici, 1976; see also Alvaro & Crano, 2017) while the latter are characteristic of a model of minority influence based on the self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg,
These models do not explain the minority influence processes according to the same principles: As a case in point, at that time, a feminist small group influence would be for the self-categorization model the result of categorizing it as ingroup – through an identification process leading to a direct influence – whereas, for the genetic model, it would depend on the capacity of this group to create a conflict of viewpoints that would first induce a resistance to persuasion – especially if the source is categorized as ingroup – but would end up with forms of indirect, delayed, or latent influence (Mugny & Pérez, 1986). Most notably, under the target's threat of being identified with the minority group (Mugny, & Papastamou, 1982), this form of influence will be favored if the source is seen as an outgroup (Pérez & Mugny, 1990).

Indeed, in the late '80s and early '90s, one of the most vividly debated issues was concerned with the social identity of the source of minority influence, and, more specifically, with its effects according to its categorization as ingroup versus outgroup. Under the large impact of both social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979, 1986) and Moscovici’s genetic model of minority influence, researchers in the area of minority influence addressed the interplay between social influence phenomena and intergroup processes throughout these years (Mugny, Pérez, Kaiser & Papastamou, 1984; Pérez & Mugny, 1998; Sanchez-Mazas, Mugny & Falomir, 1997; see also Politi, Gale & Staerklé, 2017). In contrast with the notion, very popular among scholars at that time, that people are only influenced by others who are categorized as similar to self, Mugny and his colleagues argued that minority influence and social identifications processes interacted in such a way as producing conditions allowing outgroups to exert a genuine influence. The title of his 1987 paper with Juan Pérez speaks for itself: “Paradoxical effects of categorization in minority influence: when being an outgroup is an advantage” (Pérez & Mugny, 1987).

A Societal Perspective

As stated above, the phenomenon of persuasion has not to be restricted to the study of individuals’ positive processing of a counter-attitudinal message. It can be related to a societal perspective (Staerklé & Doise, 2002), which means approaching persuasion as social influence and not solely as attitude change. Moreover, the history of the study of persuasion witnessed a turning point when Moscovici questioned the approach to phenomena of social influence which focused on conformity and looked at phenomena of innovation in their specificity (Moscovici & Faucheux, 1969; Moscovici, 1976; Moscovici, 1985).

Thus, the study of persuasion will exceed the topic of information process, communication, or argument exchange and will fall within a broader approach concerned with collective action and social movements (Pérez & Mugny, 1999). This perspective is convergent with an analysis of intergroup relations in Honneth’s terms of processes of recognition or denials of recognition (Honneth, 2002).

As a matter of fact, the recognition approach allows to regard social change and innovation, i.e. minority influence, within the normative framework and the motivational factors of the struggles for recognition, as conceptualized by Honneth. While minority influence approach is concerned with the resources allowing minority groups to introduce social change, Honneth’s theory considers, complementarily, the subjective experiences of denial of recognition leading to minority groups’ contests. Hence, negative group experiences lead to struggles for recognition that can be framed as collective actions of denied minorities. Moreover, Honneth’s notion that modern society comprises different forms of denials of recognition opens the way to the study of minorities’ opportunities for action as well as of conditions preventing the struggles for their recognition (Ellemers & Barreto, 2009; Sanchez-Mazas, 2008).

Much like Moscovici, Mugny and Pérez’s (1986) conceptualization of outgroup minority influence takes on a societal significance by explaining political and social change resulting from the social impact of active outgroup minorities. Acknowledging outgroup minority influence represents a key idea for a model of social influence as an interdependent process between majorities and minorities. Such interdependence refutes the notion that these are two discrete and separate entities and assumes, on the contrary, that they are both and simultaneously a sender and a receiver of influence (Marková, 2000; Moscovici, 1972; Moscovici & Marková, 2000). Influence, thus, has to be seen as reciprocal action instead of group pressure on an individual. The notion that social influence processes stem from conflicts of viewpoints, rather than ingroup allegiances, acknowledges the essentially controversial nature of a democratic functioning while it is vivified by different groups or social categories able to position and distinguish themselves (Moscovici & Doise, 1992).

Outgroup Minorities and the Spheres of Recognition

According to Honneth, normative integration in modern societies takes place in three distinct spheres of recognition, corresponding to three ways of relating to oneself, constructing one’s personal and social identity and motivating struggles for recognition. The sphere of love and friendship mainly relates to interpersonal relationships, whereas the two other spheres – the legal sphere and the sphere of social esteem – are relevant for understanding the dynamics of intergroup relations and are of particular interest for addressing relationships between majorities and denied or fighting members of minority groups.

Within these two spheres, individuals are recognized – or not – respectively as entitled to rights and as endorsed with specific qualities and cultural identities. As far as majorities can either grant or deny recognition, these spheres represent areas of dispute where minorities formulate demands aiming at satisfying their aspirations for integrity, autonomy, and agency, so that minorities’ actions can be interpreted as reactions to denials of recognition.
The idea of interdependence between majority and minority, marking out a space for shared communication, may be placed alongside the dialectical conception of social change developed by Honneth (1996). Honneth’s theory was developed to understand the relationship between majorities and minorities in “modern societies” – that is, in societies based on the equality of rights, individual freedom, and democracy. It makes it possible to study innovation within the normative and socio-political framework where it evolves by unpicking and differentiating the various modes of recognition peculiar to modern society. It therefore allows to account for outgroup minorities’ opportunities for action depending on the motives put forward in their struggle for recognition, i.e. obtaining social/political rights, social esteem or status.

The distinction Honneth proposes between the spheres of recognition allows a better understanding of the dynamics of social change as a product of outgroup minority influence. One development from the philosophical theory of recognition applied to the very notion of outgroup minority influence was the formulation I proposed of an interactionist approach to the study of racism and xenophobia (Sanchez-Mazas, 2004). In my application of the notion of spheres of recognition to different historical periods of intergroup relations in modern democracies, I retained the legal sphere and the sphere of social esteem because they are of particular interest for addressing intergroup relationships between minority groups (i.e. ethnic minorities or immigrants) and majority members.

This can first help identify diverse forms of reaction to particular denials of recognition corresponding to different forms of denied groups’ demands, i.e. claims at the level of the law, which is the expression of potentially universal interests, or at the level of social esteem, where new cultural content and innovations in values are defined. Second, since such a perspective has been developed in a diachronical way, it can contribute to account for the changing nature of modern prejudice (Kinder, 1986; Taylor & Katz, 1989) and for its revivals and renewed expressions in contemporary societies (Bobo, Kluegel & Smith, 1997; Dovidio, Kawakami & Gartner, 2002; McConahay, 1986; Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Sears, 1988). It is likely to throw light on the adoption by denied minorities – that is, categorized as outgroups by the majority – of alternative responses, whether proactive, reactive, or passive, to denials of recognition that go along historical or contemporary societal divisions. It should also help to explain the very conditions of possibility for outgroup minority influence and for the societal transformations it has been able – or is still likely – to bring about.

Indeed, the dynamics of claiming recognition, or responding to claims for recognition, may differ as a function of the sphere in which the struggle takes place (Honneth, 2002; Sanchez-Mazas & Roca, 2007). In the legal sphere, struggles for recognition are often undertaken in the name of principles of justice acknowledged by the majority (i.e. equal rights), so that minority members may effectively influence majority members and convince them to extend legal recognition to them. To mobilize majority members, outgroup minorities may use conflictual strategies in order to highlight the contradiction between egalitarian principles and discriminatory practices occurring in democratic societies (Katz & Hass, 1988; Myrdal, [1944] 1969; Sanchez-Mazas, 1996). Social influence rests in this case on the possibility of invoking broad principles of justice and freedom and resorts to their conflictual presentation as “organizing principles” of the minority position (Mugny & Pérez, 1991). These struggles are influential insofar as they induce majority members to support the minority’s cause and to act in the name of universalist principles of justice or equality.

These principles, peculiar to the legal sphere, have guided the aspirations, the actions and the ideals of individuals and groups since the beginning of the modern era. A typical example is the Civil Rights Movement in the USA, which was born out of a potential conflict of values within white society. The workers’ movement and women fighting for the right to vote are also minorities that denounced divisions concealed beneath the idea of equality and justice. In this way, outgroup minority influence works through the induction of a conflict that is likely to attack the ambivalence running through democratic societies and to close the gaps between discriminatory norms and the value of equality (Tajfel, 1972). In the legal sphere of recognition, outgroups are thus capable of inducing solidarity with their plight among members of the majority and of including new categories into the circle of the beneficiaries of rights that have been promoted according to an egalitarian credo.

**When the Outgroup Becomes the Other**

The legal sphere, as it is defined by Honneth, is characterized by considerable potential for extension, since legal struggles are concerned with principles of justice and equality validated by the majority. However, aspirations that grow up in the sphere of social esteem appear far more problematical. Unlike legal recognition, where people are granted rights regardless of their personal qualities, recognition in the sphere of social esteem depends on informal social judgments. This last sphere refers to the mutual appreciation of subjects. Individuals and group members judge each other as a function of the values, practices, and cultural identities represented in the surrounding society. People are evaluated positively to the extent that they are perceived as possessing the qualities and abilities that are required to contribute positively to the common practices valued in the majority group.

The application of the recognition approach to racism and xenophobia suggests that a shift in the denial of recognition may take place through the transition from the legal barrier separating former outgroup minorities (i.e. slavery, colonialism) from the majority to the informal barriers that represent prejudiced attitudes and discrimination. For example, the history of race relations in the USA illustrates that Black people’s access to equal rights gradually shifted denial of recognition from the legal sphere to that of social esteem: Having become full
citizens, the Blacks were formally equal to Whites but were still denied social esteem during the Southern “Jim Crow” system of official discrimination. Moreover, the denial of social esteem in the form of racist prejudice did not fade out as a result of the removal of segregationist barriers after the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In the realm of immigration, also, despite the citizenship obtained by people of immigrant descent, second/third-generation immigrants are often not recognized as true citizens, as they do not respond to the “cultural obligations” that the dominant model of integration prescribes in order to become a “true” citizen (Koopmans & Kriesi, 1997). Such a shift suggests that majorities strive to maintain a social or symbolic distance from minorities – hence they still see them as outgroups – even after the formal barriers have been removed. It also accounts for the expression of prejudice in terms of “cultural difference” or “cultural incompatibility” (Lamont, 2002).

The transformations occurring in today’s world – the importance of identities, political disengagement, the development of multicultural societies and of new forms of prejudice – afford increasing importance to the sphere of social esteem. Denials of recognition mostly take place in this area and are expressed in terms of individuals’ social value in connection with their presumed belonging to a devaluated outgroup. The denial of social esteem through racial prejudice, xenophobia, or discrimination is particularly salient when the targets of stigmatization benefit from formal equal rights (i.e. immigrant workers’ descent). It takes the form of the construction of “the other” or of a relegation to othersness which means the exclusion from the community of values (Jodelet, 2005), either in terms of race or cultural difference (Lamont, 2002) or through forms of “racism without race” (Elias & Scotson, 1994, 1965).

Contrary to the exclusion from the sphere of universal rights, the exclusion from the community of values destroys the interdependence between majority and minority. Despite the possession of formal rights that includes the former outgroup in the world of equals, the minority is again, yet through renewed forms of misrecognition through contempt or denial of esteem and consideration (Honneth, 1999), positioned by majority members outside the shared world. Through relegation to othersness, judgments of merit and esteem peculiar to the sphere of values are radicalized.

Indeed, one of modernity’s fundamental problems is the fact that equalization of rights leads, through social psychosocial processes, to a denial of recognition in the area of social esteem. With visionary anticipation, the French thinker Tocqueville ([1835], 1998, p. 141) wrote:

I see that in a certain portion of the territory of the United States at the present day the legal barrier which separated the two races is falling away, but not that which exists in the manners of the country, slavery recedes, but the prejudice to which it has given birth is immovable. Whoever has inhabited the United States must have perceived that in those parts of the Union in which the Negroes are no longer slaves they have in no wise drawn nearer to the whites. On the contrary, the prejudice of race appears to be stronger in the states that have abolished slavery than in those where it still exists; and nowhere is it so intolerant as in those states where servitude has never been known.

In response to this type of denial – despite the access to formal rights – through prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory practices, one can expect a radicalization of conflicts of interests between majorities and minorities (or even a competition among minority groups). This will promote the transformation of outgroups from active minorities yielding conflicts of viewpoints, values, or beliefs, to minority groups inducing such conflicts of interests by putting forward particularistic – and often ethnocentric – claims as victims.

From Active Minorities to Victim Groups

Adopting persuasive strategies in the sphere of social esteem turns out to be particularly difficult. This difficulty partly derives from the rise of the cultural paradigm, as opposed to the political paradigm that prevailed during the Cold War years. Indeed, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the division separating the world into contrasting blocs along political and ideological lines (i.e. the “political paradigm”), a new approach of international relations has developed that highlights societal differences based on cultural particularities (i.e. the “cultural paradigm”). One of the hallmarks of this novel way of viewing the world is to be found in Huntington’s (1996) thesis, The Clash of Civilizations. According to this author, the highest and most abstract level at which human beings are capable of identification is within the “civilization” to which they belong, thus discarding one basic assumption underlying the normative order of modern democracies: Equal rights as the result of belonging to mankind.

Moreover, today’s predominant approach of social divisions through cultural lenses runs the risk of defining social categories in essential terms, emphasizing issues of cultural (in)compatibility, and of categorizing presumed outgroup members in stereotypical and irretrievable terms (Sanchez-Mazas, 2004). Through relegation to othersness, judgments of merit and esteem peculiar to the sphere of values and esteem are enhanced. Exacerbation of differences in the area of social esteem is accompanied by a cutting-off of normal communication, by a negation of the speech conducive to revolt, or even by forms of systemic violence (Mohaddam, 2006). These denials may trigger responses that are no longer framed in terms of universalist interests, but rather that promote particularistic group interests instead of struggles in the name of equal rights, in an attempt to recover or gain dignity following past or present discriminations and contempt. In turn, this particularistic way of struggling for recognition encourages rejection by the wider community, thus contributing to legitimate minority violence even more. Disputes may thus result in incompatible visions, opposed to the moral ideal of “the decent society” which
Margalit (1996) defines as a society allowing the existence of diversity while granting forms of recognition to all the people that depend, in one way or another, on that particular society.

The evolution of the struggles for recognition from the legal sphere to the sphere of social esteem parallels a transformation of the action of minorities in such a way that it becomes necessary to distinguish, according to Moscovici & Perez (2009), between active minorities and victim minorities (see also Pérez & Molpeceres, 2018). Indeed, one way to strive for consideration in a context of denial of social esteem is to present one’s group as victim of past and present discriminations and contempt. This is often realized via the paradigm of memory (Licata, Klein & Gély, 2007) according to which the members of a group that has been historically victimized claim compensation for traumas inflicted on their ancestors. Rather than promoting principles likely to connect minority and majority, the victims’ claims may take an emotional tone aimed at inducing empathy, compassion or else, guilt or shame among the “dominant” majority, for its responsibility in the minority fate.

According to Moscovici and Pérez’s analysis, whereas active minorities introduced the conflict from outside in order to question the majority system of values, victimized minorities generate an internal conflict that focuses individuals on their ego and locks them into the majority framework. The roles of victims and offenders are therefore perceived as incompatible (Gray & Wegner, 2009). “By recognizing the victim, we recognize and designate a guilty: Women point to men, Indians to the Spanish, Blacks to the Whites, the colonized to the colonizers, all of whom, in a Dostoevskian universe, are responsible for everybody and before all men...” (Moscovici & Pérez, 2009, p. 86).

An outcome of these struggles for recognition is competition among the victims (Chaumont, 1997) and animosity from groups that perceive themselves as insufficiently recognized. Moreover, the processes of recognition are no longer concerned with the aspiration to extend the application of general principles, but rather to obtain compensation for past offenses. Hence, this approach renders all members of the victimized group equivalent through a process of self-stereotyping that naturalizes the victims and limits their agency. Indeed, once the compensation or the recognition has been obtained, the guilty majority has settled the case through a process of validation that characterizes latent phenomena cannot be reduced to ingroup allegiances. In line with Mugny and his colleagues, I defend the idea that social influence is rooted in the conflict that minorities are capable of introducing into the majority system of values (Sanchez-Mazas, 1996). As a complement to the notion that innovations are preceded by rejection, discrimination, and denial of active minorities, I suggest that the innovation they introduce may be followed by renewed forms of prejudice and discrimination – as in the case of hidden and subtle forms of racism – as a result of majority resistance to change (Kinder, 1986). This is all the most likely to occur that the new norms cannot be incorporated into the majority normative framework through a process of validation that characterizes latent forms of influence. The closing up of the victimized minority stance through forms of compensation prevents the phenomenon of “conversion” (Moscovici, 1980; Moscovici & Mugny, 1987), which is supposed to take place after different phases conducing the majority to adopt the minority counter-norm (Moscovici, 1985). Thus, relegation to otherness through new and indirect expressions of prejudice maintains forms of exclusion and contempt that deny the possibility of a common world.

Moreover, through struggles for recognition taking the form of violence or victimization, actors can no longer experience the diversity of their positioning and deal democratically with the divisions that run through them. Following Hirschman’s (1970) distinctions, they may choose between retreat (exit) or submission (loyalty), while the expression of disagreement (voice) is thwarted. However, just as Tajfel (1975), following Hirschman, could distinguish between different types of voice according to the subjective perceptions of intergroup relations opening the way to collective action or social creativity, social psychologists could devote attention to further distinctions of the voice according to historical and societal factors that may orient toward particularistic or broader goals the actions of minority groups. In order to reach a better understanding of contemporary forms of responses to denials of reognition, it is essential to define the broader societal context in which they are embedded.

For the voice to trigger a lasting influence, I will suggest that outgroups’ persuasive strategies suppose the reference to encompassing principles mobilized in a conflicting way. In contrast, today’s evolution of intergroup relations toward identity and cultural divisions between majorities and minorities in terms of Us and Them, seems to replace outgroup minorities’ persuasive strategies within the framework of group-specific demands less favourable for generating a genuine influence.

The voice can only be preserved with the notion of a public space of reciprocal influence, or, in more general terms, of a common world allowing the coexistence and dialogue of a plurality of positions (Gély, 2006). The processes by which individuals and groups enter spaces of reciprocal influence contribute, through their oppositions as well as their alliances, to building a shared world and to maintaining the dynamism of democratic functioning.

Guaranteeing a sphere for a voice that would not advocate solely reparation for one’s own group but an extension of recognition for a diversity of them should make it possible to bring correctives to the unilateral vision implied in the construction of the Other and the frequent misunderstandings around the meanings
attributed to the social practices of the groups that make up contemporary multicultural societies (Pourtois, 2015; Verkuyten, 2006). A major challenge attached to the building of these multicultural societies lies in the paradoxical requirement to recognize outgroup minorities’ influence while preserving the identity and distinctiveness they may claim.

Competing Interests
The author has no competing interests to declare.

References


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