Changes Following Conformity, Deviation and Concession

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the changes following conformity, deviation and concession, using majority influence paradigm. Ss were 69 female junior college students who encountered unanimous majority displaying wrong responses. Conformers changed their private opinion to meet the opinion advocated by majority. Deviates perceived majority and themselves negatively. Concessive persons modified their private opinion like the conformers, and, like the deviates, perceived the majority and themselves negatively. These results were discussed from the point of view of intra-interpersonal discrepancy and cognitive dissonance.

Key words: conformity, deviation, concession, cognitive dissonance.

Introduction

When confronted with a majority that has a different public position, an individual chooses conformity behavior or deviation behavior.

In this study, conformity refers to the public behavior which agreed with the influence source or numerical majority. Whereas deviation means the public behavior sticks to an original personal position which differs from the majority's position.

Conforming to majority leads to a situation characterized by a discrepancy between the person's private opinion and public opinion (intrapersonal discrepancy). When a person deviates from majority, He/she experiences an interpersonal discrepancy which constitutes an incongruence between his/her public behavior and the majority's one. In both cases, this would arouse a psychological tension similar to Festinger (1957)'s cognitive dissonance. For example, Gormly (1984) found that conformity aroused the person's physiological arousal. Stroebe & Diehl (1981) defined conformity as a counterattitudinal behavior which induces attitude change induced by dissonance. And Tasaki (1967, 1971, 1980) reported that discrepancy with others aroused psychological tension, raised later recall of the experimental tasks.

On the other hand, without external justification, conformity and deviation will cause discrepancies that lead to dissonance (Kouhara 1990). In this situation, the individual is motivated to reduce the dissonance, using different methods.

This dissonance reduction will be performed in such a way to avoid arousing other dissonances.

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Consequently, the way the reduction following conformity is realized and the one the reduction following deviation is realized are expected to differ from each other (Kouhara & Kano 1989).

First the person chooses conformity, experiencing the dissonance as a result of intrapersonal discrepancy, and then will change his private opinion to fit his public behavior in order to reduce the dissonance. It is the attitude change following counterattitudinal behavior (referred to in the dissonance theory), that is the most typical way of dissonance reduction. These changes emerge as a private acceptance of the majority's advocacy.

The person who deviates and experiences dissonance as a result of interpersonal discrepancy will try to rationalize this incongruence of opinions to reduce the dissonance (cognitive rationalization). In this situation, as the person advocates his/her public opinion which differs from that of majority, he/she does not have any doubts about his/her own opinion. The person rather questions others' opinions and abilities, trying theirby to reduce the dissonance.

However, Nail (1986) stressed the importance and need to investigate on another type of social responses in which an individual's moved toward the majority, without congruence. Because, in real social life, the person often chooses these medium positions rather than extreme behaviors of conformity and deviation.

In this study, the behavior which leads an individual to express his public opinion taking an intermediate position between the individual's original position and other's one is referred to as "Concession". Concession which is another way to coordinate inter-personal conflict, can be formulated from the point of view of the intra-interpersonal discrepancy model as follows.

When an individual chooses concession, the chosen position is neither the majority's position, nor his original position, which leads simultaneously to both intra- and interpersonal discrepancies. But the degree of each of these discrepancies is smaller than when conformity or deviation is chosen.

Furthermore, concession allows the individual to coordinate public behavior on opinion continuum (from his original to majority's position) determining which is proper as his public position. Using concession allows also the individual to regulate the degree of intra-and interpersonal discrepancies.

Moreover, incongruent behaviors differing from the most favorite position do not always lead to dissonance (cf. Fazio & Zanna 1977). It could be also assumed that the degree of dissonance differs dependig on the importance of cognitive elements (intra-and interpersonal discrepancy). Therefore, a person may determine which discrepancy creates the least dissonance, and chooses the public position of concession to avoid severe dissonance.

Kouhara & Kano (1989) found that individual made concession even though there was an external justification for their deviation. It showed that as individuals expect concession to result in smaller dissonance than does justified deviation, they choose concessions.

What kind of change will happen following the choice of such concession? Fazio & Zanna (1977) indicated that the dissonance reduction process did not occur in case of small cognitive inconsistency, and that the self perception in such situation in voked inference of the individual's attitude from external cues. According to this idea, individual's private opinion will move toward the public position that the individual takes when he makes concession, estimating the majority more positively than the deviate, and more negatively than the conformer.

On the other hand, Kouhara & Kano (1989) developed the hypothesis. That is, if an individual takes a position such that intra-interpersonal discrepancies and dissonance are low enough, there is little dissonance motivation. Therefore, no significant change would occur after the concession. These two assumptions contradict each other.

Using Crutschfield's method (electric confederate), Kouhara & Kano (1989) conducted a typical Asch type experiment in which the situation was so
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planed so that the majority provides unanimously an obviously wrong answer.

In the experiment, they operated "alternative for responses" to realize Nail's suggestion. The alternative was "a continuous alternative" which allows subjects to choose their public responses, taking a medium position between the majority's advocacy and the position which represents for the subjects "the right answer".

In this experiment, the subjects were provided with four opportunities (trials) to respond to the unanimous majority. This study could not clearly classify which person was a conformer, a deviator, or a concession person, because the examination of attitude change following public behavior was not the main purpose of the study. Moreover, this study could not also examine precisely the changes that occurred after each of the three behavior types.

Consequently, I have provided, in the present study, the subjects with a single opportunity (trial) to respond to the majority with different opinions, in order to categorize who conforms, deviates or makes a concession, and examine the cognitive changes following each of these behavior types.

Hypotheses
The hypotheses of present study were as follows:

1) Conformers would adjust their private opinion to meet the majority's position in case of conflict with the majority. This is a private acceptance of the majority's advocacy.

2) The deviates would not adjust their private opinion in case of the conflict, and would estimate negatively the majority.

3) People who made concession, would
   a) change neither their private opinion concerning the task nor their estimation of the majority.
   b) move their private opinion until they reach a position they express publicly, displaying a moderate estimation of the majority (middle between the conformers' and the deviates' one.

The 3a and 3b contradict each other.

Method

Subjects
subjects analyzed in this study were 69 female junior college students enrolled in an introductory psychology class. Subjects who were aware of the real purpose of this experiment and the experimental plans were omitted from the analysis. Subjects received course credit for their participation. Subjects were organized in groups of five persons.

Material and Apparatus
Subjects were asked to resolve six problems as a part of a newly improved vocational aptitude test. The problems consisted in indicating the rating probability that Mr. X is the real author of a given sentence. Each problem consisted of one simple sentence and profiles of two persons, Mr. X and Mr. Y. Subjects were instructed that Mr. X or Mr. Y was the real author of the sentence. There were many obvious cues in the profiles and the sentence indicating which of the two persons was the real author of the sentence.

The experimenter asked Subjects to guess which person (Mr. X or Mr. Y) was the author. He instructed subjects in the following "Today, we use a response recording machine. So, you have to push the button on your desktop-type machine which shows the response of the other four persons and your response. Each desktop machine has five buttons. Please indicate the possibility of Mr. X being the real author of the sentence by pushing one of the five buttons. Caution that Mr. X in each problem is a different person. For example, Mr. X in problem No. 1 and Mr. X in problem No. 2 are different persons, The same is true for Mr. Y."

This is typical of Crutschfield Method. The desktop machines that had indicator lamps and response buttons were connected to the experimenter's control unit.

The experimenter controlled informations using the unit. He provided the subjects with deceptive responses of other people (electric confederates). Subjects were made to believed that
their desktop machines indicated the other four people's real responses.

Response alternative

Subjects were asked to rate how likely it was that Mr. X was the real author of the sentence using 5 buttons, with button ⑤ indicating less than 10%, ④ about 30%, ③ about 50%, ② about 70%, and ① more than 90%.

Informational operation and deception

The experimenter instructed the subjects in the following “To record your responses with these machines, please respond in proper sequence from the first respondent to the fifth respondent.” In fact, the experimenter told each of the five subjects that she was “the fifth respondent.” therefore, each subject believed that she was the fifth respondent, and the other four person were respondents from No. 1 to No. 4.”

In problem No. 4, the sentence had many obvious cues suggesting that the real author was Mr. X, not Mr. Y. The answer was ①, but, the experimenter controlled the desktop indicator of the subjects and indicated that the other four persons apparently answered wrong by pushing button No ⑤, which was the extreme position in the response continuum. In problems from No. 1 to No. 6, except No. 4, proper responses were indicated as the other four persons’ answers.

Control group

A control group which had no informational deception was set up. Subjects belonging to this group watched the real responses of the other four subjects on their desktop indicator.

Procedure

The procedure followed the standard conformity experiment format of ① general instruction, ② individual pre test, ③ group session (including critical trial), ④ individual post test (measurement of private change), and ⑤ debriefing.

Before group session, subjects were asked to resolve the six problems individually (pre test). The pre test problems were similar to those in the next group session.

Group session

Five persons simultaneously answered the problems, watching “the other four persons' responses” on a desktop indicator. These responses were deceptive information operated and provided by the experimenter.

In each trial, subjects were asked successively to fill out questionnaires about the credibility of others' responses and confidence in their own responses, using a 7 point scale.

Post test

After group session, subjects were asked to answer the same six problems individually (post test). In the post test, the experimenter instructed subjects to rate the probability that Mr. X was the real author of the sentence, in the same six problems, using a 101 point scale (from 0% to 100%). This was used to determine the private change as regards the problem.

Debriefing

After following up the questionnaire, Subjects were debriefed about the existence of informational deception. The experimenter explained the real purpose of the session and thanked subjects for their participation, before dismissing them.

Results

Subjects’ Classification

Concerning problem No. 4, Subjects who changed their position from the pre test position during group session, and were congruent with majority's advocacy were categorized as “conformers”. Those who did not change their position from the pre test position were classified as “deviates”. This later included the subjects who moved away from the majority’s advocacy. The subjects who moved towards the majority’s position instead of moving to a position of congruence were classified
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as "concessive subjects". The distribution of subjects in problem No. 4 was as follows: conformity 14, concession 24, deviation 16, and control group 15.

**Distribution of responses in the pre test**

In the pre test, the distribution of responses concerning problem No. 4 was as follows: point 1=42 (60.9%); point 2=21 (30.4%); point 3=6 (8.9%); point 4=0; point 5=0. The results showed that subjects perceived Mr. X as the real author of the sentence.

**Problem-related changes**

As indicating in Table 1, problem-related changes were determined using post test mean scores on the probability that Mr. X was the real author of the sentence. For better understanding, the scores in Table 1 were adjusted, with a higher score meaning a higher change toward majority's advocacy.

The results of ANOVA (F=9.03 df=3/65) showed that the change following conformity was about the same as the change following concession.

Moreover, the mean score of concessive persons was at midpoint between majority's advocacy and their original position. This position was congruent with their public behaviors. As regards the change following deviation, it was, like the control group, sufficiently small. The results supported thus hypotheses 1, 2, and 3B discussed above.

**Estimation of the credibility of others' responses**

An ANOVA (F=4.74 df=3/65 p<.01) and the subordinate test (p<.05) were conducted to determine the estimation of the credibility of others' (majority's) responses in problem No. 4. This estimation was a measure for the subjects' positive/negative change in majority perception.

The results showed significant differences among the four groups. As indicated in Table 2, the deviates estimated the majority negatively in the responses to critical problem. This result corresponds to what was predicted in hypothesis 2.

### Table 1

**Change as regards the critical problem**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Conformity</th>
<th>Concession</th>
<th>Deviation</th>
<th>Control</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>43.92 a</td>
<td>44.96 a</td>
<td>21.25 b</td>
<td>19.47 b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* A higher score means higher change toward majority's opinion. The scores range from 0 to 100. Significant differences are indicated by denoted alphabets.

Subjects who made concession rated also the others negatively (Hypothesis 3B). The conformers' estimation was the same as the control group's one. The conformers display no negative estimation of the majority's response which became the conformers' own public responses.

For further analyses, another index was examined.
Estimation of the confidence in one’s own response

Subjects were asked to rate the confidence in one’s own response during group session. As indicated in Table 3, the results of ANOVA ($F=8.73$, $df=3/65$, $p<.01$) and Tukey test ($p<.05$) of problem No. 4 revealed significant differences. Concessive subjects estimated their own responses more negatively than did the conformers though there was not statistical significance. Beside this the majority’s position, rating both of their own and the majority’s responses as being certain like the control group subjects. These results show that conformers who were congruent with majority’s position had a positive attitude towards the majority, the response itself and themselves. This positive attitude was consistent with conformers’ public behavior, as a result of dissonance reduction following conformity.

Moreover, it was possible to explain the

difference, both, conformers and concessive subjects, displayed important changes as regards problem No. 4.

Interestingly enough, compared to the control group, the deviates had also low self evaluation. However, as discussed in the preceding section, they rated also negatively the credibility of others’ responses. The deviates were similar to the concessive subjects in terms of estimation of one’s own and others’ responses.

Discussion

The results of the present experiment supported fully hypotheses 1, 2, and partially 3B.

The conformers changed their opinion to meet changes following conformity behavior as a result of dissonance reduction. However, it is not possible to verify in the present experiment whether a post-decision dissonance was experienced. This experiment had no direct measurement for the dissonance arousal, namely, physiological measurement or aversion rating, or any condition that could stimulate the arousal, such as external justification of behavior. For example, if the above explanation concerning the effect of dissonance reduction is valid, external justification will restrain changes following behavior. In the future, it would be necessary to conduct experiments to examine post effect of changes following conformity and deviation.
As regards deviation, subjects did not, as expected, change their private opinion, perceiving the unanimous majority negatively. This negative perception reflected in a low rating of the credibility of the majority’s responses.

Negative estimation of unanimous wrong majority is, for the deviates, an effective way to explain interpersonal discrepancy, reduce the dissonance, and further enhance dislikeness of the majority.

However, how will the deviates perceive, with the time, the majority? Will they think of the majority as an “out group”, or forget such an aversive discrepancy (cf. Elkin & Leippe 1986)?

It is important and interesting to examine this post effect too, because this would provide many findings which will help understanding the majority/minority mutual influence process.

Moreover, deviates were characterized also by a low evaluation of their own response. This is probably due to social conflict, and social inconsistency. The conformers experienced equally social inconsistency, before conforming, but could get social support of majority as a result of their conformity. The deviates could not, however, experience this support.

They experienced interpersonal discrepancy, and felt psychological tension, anxiety, or aversive dissonance. Consequently, they could not have enough confidence in their responses. Negative estimation of both their own and the majority’s provided support for these interpretations.

One of the important differences between deviates and conformers is the fact that the deviates did not experience dissonance reduction by means of private change as regards the problem.

The concessive subjects changed their opinion, and evaluated the majority negatively. They had thus characteristics of both conformers and deviates.

Kouhara & Kano (1989) did not find private change among those who made concession. However, the results of the present study is not consistent with this finding. This was due to the fact that the analysis of the former study was restrictive, because the analysis of the changes did not constitute the main purpose of that study; it was rather a supplementary analysis.

In the present study, subjects who made concession changed their private opinion. This private movement might be the result of self perceptual process, not dissonance reduction process.

In the case of subjects who made concession, they changed their private opinion in the following fasion. That is, owing to the existence of unanimous response of the majority, they adjusted public their opinion to the majority’s advocacy, expressing their public opinion at the medium point between the majority’s position and their private original position.

This public opinion was, however, not so far from their original opinion. It was closer to the original position than in the case of conformers. It was probably within their lattitude of acceptance. They could thus form their private opinion, making it consistent with their public position (cf. Fazio & Zanna, 1977).

However, if the change following concession was the results of dissonance reduction aroused by intrapersonal discrepancy (which was smaller than in conformity), the resulting dissonance and the change had to be smaller. But the result of present study showed that there is sufficient change dening such an interpretation. The change following concession would not be, thus, the result of dissonance reduction.

In addition, negative estimations of others’ and ones’ own responses were not smaller than the deviates. These show that dissonance reduction process does not lead to cognitive changes in the case of concessive subjects.

Concessive subjects display both conformity and deviation characteristics. It is noteworthy that concessive behavior is another style of social response to cope with social conflicts.

Research on concessive behavior pertains to the field of minority influence (e.g. Moscovici, 1985).

The term minority includes both deviates (an extreme minority) and concessive (a moderate...
minority) persons. It is difficult for extreme minority (a deviate) to function as an influence source. On the contrary, the concession style may help to preserve the minority status for a long time, as long as the consessive persons' public position is nearer to that of majority than that of deviate person who is characterized rather by a larger public discrepancy which often leads to aversive dissonance (cf. Kouhara & Kano 1989) or direct social attacks.

It might be, thus, easier to be “a semi conformer” than “a perfect deviate”.

The fact that the number of subjects who chose concession was higher than the one of those who chose conformity or deviation shows that concession was easier than conformity or deviation.

Yoshitake, Kano, Yoshiyama & Kouhara (1990), for instance, have studied social responses by which an individual, while being influenced by others, influences others as well. They call these responses “active conformity”, and “active deviation” (active nonconformity).

These behaviors aim at simultaneously preserving the person’s original advocacy or opinion, and making group consensus.

They are often observed in daily life. The concession would be thus an effective behavior style for majority/minority members who want to make a consensus.

Finally, research on social influence hereafter should combine the study of the choice or forms of public behavior (e.g. Asch 1951, Allen 1965) with the study of private changes following public behavior, integrating them as two aspects of a single social influence process.

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