

This Week's Citation Classic

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Deutsch M & Gerard H B. A study of normative and informational social influences upon individual judgment. *J. Abnorm. Soc. Psychol.* 51:629-36, 1955. [Research Center for Human Relations, New York University, New York, NY]

The effects of two different types of social influence upon individual judgment were investigated: normative and informational. Prior studies of 'group' influence were shown to involve only incidentally the type of influence most specifically associated with groups, normative influence. The role of normative influence in buttressing as well as undermining individual experience was also investigated. [The *Social Sciences Citation Index*® (SSCI™) indicates that this paper has been cited over 190 times since 1966.]

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"Gerard and I were intrigued by the Asch situation: a situation in which a naive subject makes judgments about which of three lines is most similar in length to a standard line after being exposed to false, but unanimous, judgments by three accomplices of the experimenter. It was a very popular paradigm for doing research on the effects of social influence upon individual judgment prior to our study. Gerard thought he could develop a simple apparatus which would make it easier to conduct and record the results of an Asch-type experiment and I thought that the term 'group influence' was being misused to characterize the social psychological processes in the usual Asch-type experiment. Normally, the subject was not given experimental instructions which made him feel that he was a member of a group faced with a common task requiring cooperative work for its most effective solution. Gerard and I joined efforts, using his neatly-designed apparatus, to show what would happen when we either enhanced or

diminished the 'groupiness' of the people in the experimental situation. We labeled the type of social influence most associated with groups as 'normative social influence' and distinguished this from 'informational social influence' which does not require groups. We also designed the experiment so as to have relevance to other basic issues; most notably, to demonstrate that normative social influence could buttress as well as undermine individuality in judgment. That is, the norms of a group could strengthen an individual's resolve to express his personal views or they could pressure him to conform to majority opinion.

"The distinction between 'normative' and 'informational' social influence caught on and has been widely employed; the methodology has been adopted and improved by others; and some of its other ideas have also stimulated research by others. When I wrote the paper, I did not think that it was a particularly important one. For me, it was mainly a commonsense protest against some intellectual sloppiness about 'group' influences. It was outside my primary stream of theoretical and experimental work. I have been surprised by its popularity. I have written other papers and books on cooperation and competition and also on conflict resolution which seems to me to be of considerably greater significance, theoretically and practically, than this one. Although these works are well known, they appear to have been cited less often. I am not sure why. But I suspect that our 'Citation Classic' paper offered cogent criticisms of some basic ideas, as well as methodological innovations, in a 'trendy' research area."