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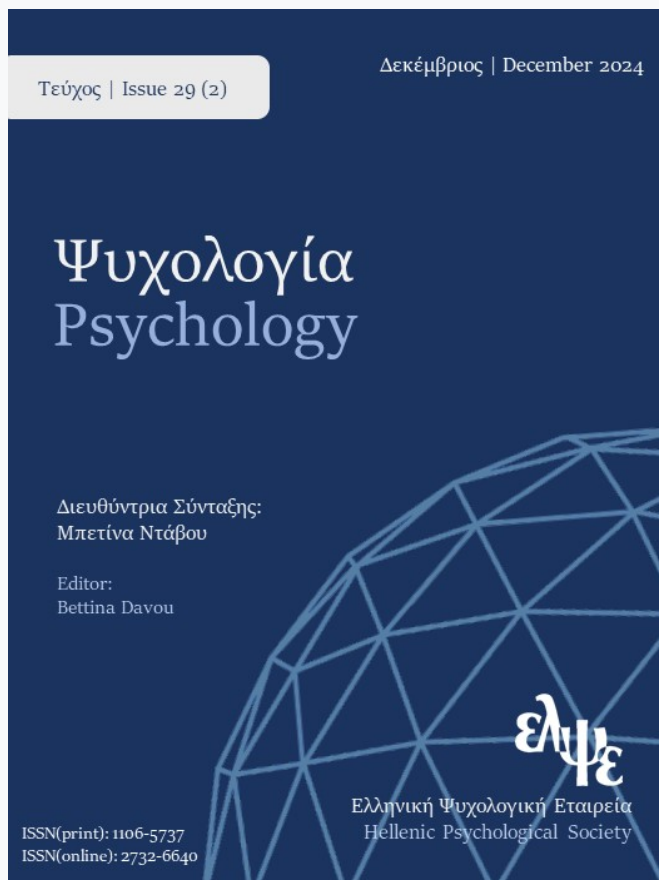
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Towards an integration of different approaches to social influence: from thought-listing to source-message evaluation

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ABSTRACT

The present paper aims to contribute to a convergence of two distinct approaches to social influence, one based on persuasion literature, and one based on the genetic model of social influence. Moreover, the goal is to disentangle the conditions that affect the complex relations among source status (majority vs. minority), kind of influence (direct vs. indirect), type of argumentation (strong vs. weak), and psychological processes (cognitive processing vs. comparison validation elaboration). In both experiments source status and argument quality were manipulated, and a third independent variable was introduced, the introduction (or not) of a thought listing task (Experiment 1), and the introduction of differential psychological process, cognitive processing (via a thought listing task) vs. comparison validation elaboration (via a source-message evaluation) (Experiment 2). Analyses showed that, in Experiment 1, the no-thought list conditions led to greater direct influence whereas the thought listing conditions led to greater indirect influence. Also, minority influence was greater than majority influence. In Experiment 2, only in the thought-listing conditions, as in Experiment 1, strong arguments led to greater direct influence than weak arguments; for indirect influence significant results were found for minority source only: weak arguments were more influential in thought listing condition than source-message evaluation condition and strong arguments in source-message evaluation condition. These findings are discussed in the light of bringing together two distinct thus far approaches to social influence.

Introduction

In recent decades, two different approaches to the phenomena of minority and majority influence have appeared in the relevant literature (Martin & Hewstone, 2010 for a review). One emerges from the research stream of *persuasion and attitude change* (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). This research tradition emphasizes the extent, direction and quality of the recipient's cognitive processing of the message, based on the source status and the argumentation quality. The other approach is inscribed in the context of research on *social influence* (Moscovici, 1976; Mugny, 1982; Mugny & Pérez, 1991). This approach proposes as an explanatory mechanism of influence the type and intensity of the conflict processed by the receiver, both during contact with the source and during the processing of the message content.

An examination of the relevant literature has revealed some points on which there is consensus between these different approaches and others on which there is disagreement. Namely, there is consensus on: a) the existence of two different types of influence, *direct and indirect* (for a thorough presentation, see Glaser et al., 2015), b) the finding that there are different socio-psychological processes that make each of these two types of

influence possible (Papastamou et al., 2017 b), and (c) the importance of the argumentation quality developed by the source of influence in the social influence process (for a detailed and critical discussion of the topic in theoretical and methodological terms, see Stroebe, 2010). There is, however, disagreement as to: a) the privileged relationship that may link the minority or majority status of the source to the type of direct or indirect influence exercised (for an overview, see Gardikiotis et al., 2010), b) the explanations proposed for the different socio-psychological processes leading to the exercise of indirect and direct influence: sometimes there is reference to more or less, respectively, *cognitive processing* of the message by the participants (Eagly & Chaiken, 1984) and sometimes to *dissociation* or *indissociation,* respectively, of the message from its source (Mugny & Pérez, 1991; Pérez & Mugny, 1996; Papastamou, 1986), and c) the sociopsychological mechanisms that researchers invoke to explain the differential production of social influence: on the one hand, reference is made to argumentation quality (Johnson & Eagly, 1989; Johnson et al., 2005) which distinguishes strong from weak arguments based on their cognitive characteristics as a function of the participants' cognitive process. On the other hand, emphasis is placed on the *sociocognitive conflict* and the ways of its handling by the source of influence, through the *style of behaviour* that induces it (Moscovici, 1976) and the *style of negotiation* that resolves it (Mugny, 1982).

The fluid link between the status of the source and the direct and indirect influence exerted

Although there is a plethora of research attesting to the existence of two distinct kinds of social influence, direct and indirect, these same studies show that the privileged link between each of these influence processes and the status of the source is less obvious than it was at the beginning of these studies in the mid-1970s. In fact, the first studies that systematically compared majority and minority influence showed that the majority exercised more direct and public influence than the minority, and less indirect and private influence (Moscovici, 1980; Moscovici et al., 1981; Papastamou, 1983). Some others documented a superiority of the majority over the minority in both direct and public influence and indirect and private influence (Maass & Clark, 1986). Still others demonstrated that the majority was superior in direct and public influence while the minority was superior in indirect influence, and that this differentiation was particularly strong when participants engaged in systematic elaboration of the source's arguments (De Dreu & de Vries, 1996). Martin and Hewstone (2001), Crano and Chen, 1988), Kerr (2002), and Baker and Petty (1994) on their part showed that when the topic of influence was of significant personal interest to the participants, leading them to increased cognitive processing of the message, then the majority was more influential than the minority. Trost, Maass, and Kenrick's (1992) findings completed the picture by illustrating that if the high personal importance of the topic did indeed favour majority influence, its low personal importance favoured, on the contrary, minority influence.

The undeniable complexity of majority and minority influence processes (see Quiamzade et al., 2010) as revealed by the fluidity of majority and minority direct and indirect influence is made even more evident by the equally fluidity of the greater 'persuasiveness' of strong versus weak arguments.

The fluctuating predominance of strong over weak arguments in the context of majority and minority influence

Indeed, the increasingly broadening consensus around the crucial role of *argument quality effect* in social influence (see for example Martin & Hewstone, 2008) does not prevent the emergence of contradictory experimental findings: not only is the superiority of strong over weak arguments less generalized than originally thought (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981; Petty & al., 1983) but furthermore it seems to occur selectively: Baker and Petty (1994), for example, show that strong argumentation is much more influential than weak argumentation when the source of the message is the majority, while Martin and Hewstone (2003) argue that this is, in contrast, the case when the message comes from a minority. Also of interest is the finding of Erb, Bohner, et al. (2002) that

the superiority of strong argumentation occurs when the majority supports it and participants are moderate in their attitudes. When participants are exposed to a counter-attitudinal message this same superiority occurs, in contrast, in the case of minority influence. We ought to notice here that the very fact that, in the large majority of experiments in social influence in recent years, counter-attitudinal persuasive messages are used, strengthens the sense of a privileged relationship between the superiority of strong arguments and the minority status of the source of influence.

The variability of the argument quality effect on exerted influence may be due, as demonstrated by Areni & Lutz (1988), to the ambiguity of the operationalization of the concept of argumentation quality in the sense that, as they argue, it confounds argument strength and argument valence. It could be argued, however, that it could also be due to its rather tautological definition, since, by definition, strong arguments are assumed to be more persuasive, credible, and popular than weak arguments (Krosnick & Petty, 1995; Petty et al., 1995). In this sense, we could assume that strong arguments could be understood as trivial, consensual, and majoritarian. In contrast to weak arguments which would be perceived by participants as more original, conflicting, and in a position of minority and, therefore, according to the *conflict elaboration theory of social influence* (Pérez & Mugny, 1996), they would potentially be able to exert in some cases more influence than strong arguments.

From thought-listing to source-message elaboration

A particularly crucial issue in the persuasion and social influence literature is, undoubtedly, the one that arises from the "hard core" of the two different approaches, namely: (a) the two different processes that according to persuasion models (see for example, Petty & Cacioppo, 1981) allow for attitude change: 1) the central route of message processing that produces strong attitudes, stable in time and resistant to change, and 2) the peripheral route that leads to the production of weak, less resistant and transient attitudes. b) the two different processes that, according to Moscovici's *conversion theory* (1980, 1985), underlie the exertion of minority and majority influence, direct and indirect: 1) the *validation* process which consists exclusively in the cognitive processing by participants of the message content and leads mainly to indirect minority influence, and 2) the *social comparison* process which leads participants to compare equally exclusively their own views with those of the source, thus facilitating mainly the direct majority influence.

The purpose of the two experimental studies presented here is to contribute to the integration of the aforementioned approaches: *persuasion and attitude change* and the *genetic model of social influence*. In particular, they aspire to contribute to elucidating the parameters that determine the complex relationships between the source status and the type of influence exerted, the type of argumentation and the socio-cognitive processing that participants engage in during the social influence process.

Both experiments apply the now classic 2 source (majority-minority) X 2 argumentation quality (strong-weak) experimental design, which a variety of approaches within both the persuasion and social influence traditions has so far employed. In the first experiment, the third independent variable added is the participants' thoughts recording or not immediately after exposure to the message and before measuring direct and indirect influence. The use of the thought-listing technique is known to be a methodological constant in both persuasion and influence approaches as it is considered to capture the extent, direction, and quality of the recipient's cognitive processing. Whether or not the participants are asked or not to record the thoughts they had while reading the message corresponds to high or low cognitive elaboration, respectively facilitating or not facilitating direct or indirect influence. In other words, in this experiment, we do not use thought-listing as a "neutral" methodological tool to capture the recipients' cognitive elaboration but we explore its contribution in its interaction with source status and argument quality in facilitating or inhibiting different types of influence exerted.

In the second experiment, the third independent variable introduced concerns the type of socio-cognitive elaboration we activate in participants. Thus, in half of the experimental conditions we induce thought-listing while in the other half, we ask them to evaluate both the source and the content of the message. In this way, we attempt to link and contrast two different methodological lines and partly corresponding theoretical traditions. On the one hand, the use of the thought-listing technique expresses the cognitive approach of persuasion to the phenomena of influence, and on the other hand, source-message evaluation is a means of operationalizing the mechanisms of social comparison and validation, as proposed by the conversion theory.

Experiment 1

Method

Participants and design. One hundred and fifty-six people (74 males, 82 females, M_{age} = 29.40 SD = 11.41) participated voluntarily in the study. They were randomly allocated to one of the eight experimental conditions of a 2 (source status: majority vs. minority) x 2 (argumentation quality: strong vs. weak) x 2 (cognitive elaboration: no thought-listing vs thought-listing) between-subjects factorial design. All of them were in favour of voluntary euthanasia (M= 4.36 SD= .48) and expressed a moderate attitude towards the right of suicide (M=3.00, SD= 1.55) when they were pretested on respective 5-point Likert scales.

Stimulus materials. The topic of influence was that of "the legalization of voluntary euthanasia" which has been used in previous studies (e.g., Martin et al., 2002). The text comprised five arguments and the strong and weak versions of persuasive messages were developed following conventional procedures (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993, p. 311; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, p. 133. See Gardikiotis et al., 2005; Martin et al., 2002; Martin & Hewstone, 2003). Participants were informed that "A majority of 82% (or a minority of 18%) of the sample were against voluntary euthanasia".

Procedure. Participants were tested individually or in groups of up to three. They completed three booklets in turn without referring back to previous ones. The first booklet contained the instructions and the screening items. Participants gave their attitudes to two issues on 5-point Likert scales from 1, *Do not agree at all* to 5, *Agree completely*. These attitude issues were: (1) "*The legalization of voluntary euthanasia, that is, the right to end one's life if suffering from a terminal illness*" (this was the target attitude issue), (2) "T*he right to suicide*". Having completed the first booklet participants were given the second booklet that contained the background information and the source and argument quality manipulations. They were informed that, according to a national survey, either a majority of 82% (or a minority of 18%) of the sample was *against* the legalization of voluntary euthanasia. They were then asked to read the relative arguments against voluntary euthanasia. The third booklet contained thought-listing measures (only for the participants of the respective conditions) and attitudes. Finally, participants gave their gender and age. At the end of the study, they were thanked and de-briefed.

Dependent measures

Thought-Listing. As in previous experiments (Baker & Petty, 1994; Gardikiotis et al., 2005; Martin et al., 2002; Martin & Hewstone, 2003), participants (only in the respective conditions) were instructed to give their thoughts on the issue presented in the message. They could write down their thoughts (either pro- or anti-voluntary euthanasia or neutral) in a number of 'idea boxes' (one thought in each box). A thoughts index was computed by dividing the number of antivoluntary euthanasia thoughts by the total number of pro- and antieuthanasia thoughts (see Baker & Petty, 1994). The higher this ratio, the greater the message-congruent thoughts.

Attitudes. Participants were asked to give their attitudes towards (a) the legalization of voluntary euthanasia (the direct influence measure), and the right to suicide (which served as the indirect influence measure) on three 7-point semantic differential scales. The end points of the scale *were bad-good, foolish-wise, and harmful-*

beneficial. The attitude toward *the right to suicide* was chosen as a measure of indirect influence because a) it concerns a topic that is not explicitly addressed in the influential message but it is moderately related to the direct influence measure (as indicated by the correlation of the two measures at the pretest where $r = .38$, $p < .002$) and b) was considered to be subject to the same organizing principle as the attitude towards the legalization of voluntary euthanasia: the right to self-determination of life. It should be noted that for the sake of clarity in the presentation of the results, the scales in the post-test (direct and indirect influence measure) were reversed so that the higher the average, the more the participants agree with the views of the source of influence, i.e., the greater the direct or indirect influence exerted.

Results and discussion

Since a bias was found in the age distribution in the different experimental conditions, this variable was included in the following analyses as a covariate. ANOVA on the thought-list index didn't return any statistically significant result.

We conducted a 4-way mixed ANOVA: 2 (source status: majority vs minority) x 2 (argument quality: strong vs. weak) x 2 (cognitive elaboration: no thought-listing vs thought-listing) x 2 (type of influence: direct vs indirect) with the last factor as within-subject (see Table 1), which revealed a significant interaction between cognitive elaboration and type of influence, $F(1,146) = 15.37$, $p < .0001$, $\eta_p^2 = .095$.

Table 1. *Means of direct and indirect influence as a Function of Source Status, Argumentation Quality and Type of Elaboration (7-point scale, standard deviations between brackets)*

		Majority		Minority	
		Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
Direct Influence	No Thought-listing	3.24 (1.62)	3.54 (1.68)	4.15 (1.82)	3.98 (2.01)
	Thought-listing	2.94 (1.10)	2.29 (0.99)	3.32 (1.45)	2.43 (1.59)
Indirect Influence	No Thought-listing	3.41 (1.73)	3.46 (1.95)	4.45 (1.63)	3.75 (2.00)
	Thought-listing	4.73 (1.66)	3.70 (1.58)	4.68 (1.82)	4.71 (2.24)

Direct influence appears to be greater in the absence of thought-listing ($M_{no\ thought-listing} = 3.73$, $SD = 1.61$) than in the conditions where it is requested from participants ($M_{thought-listing} = 2.75$, $SD = 1.36$), $F(1,146) = 11.42$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .073$ whereas, as far as indirect influence is concerned, the opposite is the case: in conditions where participants are asked to list their thoughts, the indirect influence is greater ($M_{thought-listing} = 4.46$, $SD = 1.88$) than when they are not involved in such a cognitive process ($M_{no\ thought-listing} = 3.77$, $SD = 1.86$), $F(1,146) = 3.88$, $p = .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .026$. It seems that the absence of a thought-listing facilitates direct influence, while in the case of thought-listing it is indirect influence that is facilitated ($M_{Indirect} = 4.46$, $SD = 1.88$), being in fact greater than direct influence ($M_{Direct} = 2.75$, $SD = 1.36$), multiple comparisons test Bonferroni: $p < .05$.

Regarding indirect influence, the 3-way between-subjects ANOVA revealed a marginally significant main effect of source status, $F(1,146) = 3.68$, $p = .057$, $\eta_p^2 = .025$, namely, the minority tends to exert more indirect influence ($M_{Minority} = 4.40$, $SD = 1.96$) than the majority ($M_{Majority} = 3.83$, $SD = 1.81$). To get a better insight into

the role of presence or absence of thought-listing, the results of direct and indirect influence were further analyzed for the respective conditions separately. The results indicate that only in the thought-listing conditions and only at the level of direct influence does the argument quality effect appear; this is exactly what the statistically significant main effect, $F(1,68) = 6.16$, $p = .016$, $\eta_p^2 = .083$, of argumentation quality indicates: the strong argumentation appears to have a greater direct influence ($M_{Strong} = 3.38$, $SD = 1.28$) than the weak one ($M_{Weak} = 2.61$, $SD = 1.33$).

This finding together with the previous ones seems to confirm our choice not to keep the thought-listing constant, in line with the widely established research practice in the field of persuasion and social influence phenomena. Indeed, our results suggest that whether or not participants will engage in documenting the thoughts they had when exposed to the message releases different dynamics in terms of different levels of influence. In the direct level, thought-listing appears to facilitate the argument quality effect but generally impedes this type of manifest influence. In contrast, it boosts influence at an indirect level, which appears to be greater than the direct one. With this in mind, one may be allowed to conclude that this methodological technique is anything but a "neutral" tool for recording cognition. Rather, on the contrary, it is in itself a means of inducing or supporting the validation process, which, according to conversion theory, is the mechanism responsible for (the mainly indirect) minority influence.

Experiment 2

Participants and design

One-hundred and twenty-four people (62 males, 62 females, $M_{age} = 29.65$ $SD = 6.89$) participated voluntarily in the study. They were randomly allocated to one of the eight experimental conditions of a 2 (source status: majority vs. minority) x 2 (argument quality: strong vs. weak) x 2 (type of elaboration: thought-listing vs source-message evaluation) between subjects factorial design. All of them were in favour of voluntary euthanasia ($M = 4.36$ $SD = .48$) and expressed a moderate attitude towards the right of suicide ($M = 2.98$, $SD = 1.51$) when they were pretested on respective 5-point Likert scales. Stimulus materials, procedure and measures were identical to those of Experiment 1, with the exception of the source-message evaluation measure. Following Papastamou (1993), participants in the respective conditions were instructed to indicate their agreement using 7-point Likert scales to six items (three positive and three negative) referring to the source of the message (e.g., "The people that support these arguments have a stable character", "The supporters of these arguments do not have a well-balanced personality") and their agreement to six items (three positive and three negative as well) referring to the arguments of the message (e.g., "These ideas are realistic", "This point of view is irrational"). We calculated the scores of positive and negative evaluation for source and message and then following the same procedure as with the thoughts index we computed an index of negative source-evaluation and negative message-evaluation by dividing the respective negative score by the sum of negative and positive ones.

Results and discussion

A bias was found in the age distribution and with regard to attitude towards the right to suicide in the different experimental conditions, so the two variables were included in the following analyses as covariates.

Considering direct influence, a marginally significant 2-way interaction between argumentation quality and type of elaboration appeared: $F(1,114) = 3.32$, $p = .07$, $\eta_p^2 = .028$. According to the Bonferroni Multiple Comparison Test ($p = .015$), only in the thought-listing conditions, as in Experiment 1, strong arguments ($M_{Strong} = 3.22$, $SD = 1.34$) led to greater direct influence than weak arguments ($M_{weak} = 2.44$, $SD = 1.39$). This is compatible to most recent studies that have shown greater influence for the strong arguments having employed a counter-attitudinal message (meaning participants in these studies were 'distant' participants, c.f. Martin & Hewstone, 2008).

Table 2. *Means of indirect influence as a Function of Source Status, Argumentation Quality and Type of Elaboration (7-point scale, standard deviations between brackets)*

	Majority		Minority	
	Strong	Weak	Strong	Weak
Thought-listing	4.92 (1.57)	3.99 (1.61)	4.40 (1.93)	4.15 (2.29)
Source-message evaluation	4.36 (1.76)	4.67 (1.80)	4.87 (1.79)	2.94 (1.36)

Concerning indirect influence (see Table 2), ANOVA revealed a significant 3-way interaction $F(1,114) = 10.31$, $p = .002$, $\eta_p^2 = .083$. Simple effects analysis showed that only in minority conditions and when participants engage in source-message evaluation task, the argument quality effect appears again and at the indirect level, $F(1,114) = 13.58$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .106$, ($M_{Strong} = 4.87$, $SD = 1.79$, $M_{weak} = 2.94$, $SD = 1.36$). It seems that the composite source-message evaluation turns out to be damaging for the indirect influence of minority weak arguments. This is not only because it appears to block the indirect influence compared to minority strong arguments but also compared to the respective majority weak arguments ($M_{Majority/weak} = 4.67$, $SD = 1.80$), $F(1,114) = 13.22$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .104$. Finally, of particular interest is the finding that, in contrast to the source-message evaluation, the thought-listing process appears to ease the indirect influence of minority weak arguments ($M_{Thought-listing/Weak} = 4.15$, $SD = 2.29$), $F(1,114) = 5.98$, $p = .016$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. This finding seems to support our choice to compare the two different types of elaboration, that appear to operate differently particularly in minority weak arguments. These arguments appear particularly vulnerable to the association allowed by the source-message evaluation which points to the selectively eroding effect of psychologization on minority influence.

To examine the effect of composite negative evaluation emergence on reducing indirect influence in the case of weak minority argumentation, we conducted a moderated mediation analysis (PROCESS macro v.4; model 8; Hayes, 2018) using 10.000 bootstrap samples, with argumentation quality as independent variable (strong = 1, weak = 2), source status (majority = 1, minority = 2) as moderator, index of negative source-evaluation and index of negative message-evaluation as mediators and indirect measure as outcome. Analysis (see Table 3 and Figure1a & 1b) revealed, as expected, that only in minority conditions, argument quality effect on indirect influence is mediated by both the negative evaluation of the source and the negative evaluation of the message.

Table 3. *Conditional indirect effects of Argument Quality to Indirect Influence through Negative Source Evaluation & Negative Message Evaluation, BootSE, and 95% confidence intervals for majority and minority conditions*

Conditions	Path	IE	BootSE	95%CI
Majority	Argumentation Quality → Negative Source Evaluation → Indirect Influence	.0755	.1280	[-.1707 .3580]
	Argumentation Quality → Negative Message Evaluation → Indirect Influence	-.1024	.1417	[-.4370 .3580]
Minority	Argumentation Quality → Negative Source Evaluation → Indirect Influence	-.3803	.2394	[-.9473 -.0071]
	Argumentation Quality → Negative Message Evaluation → Indirect Influence	.5015	.2519	[.0467 1.031]

Figure 1a. *Parallel multiple mediation analysis of Argumentation Quality on Indirect Influence through negative source & message evaluation for majority conditions. Unstandardized OLS regression path coefficients are shown*
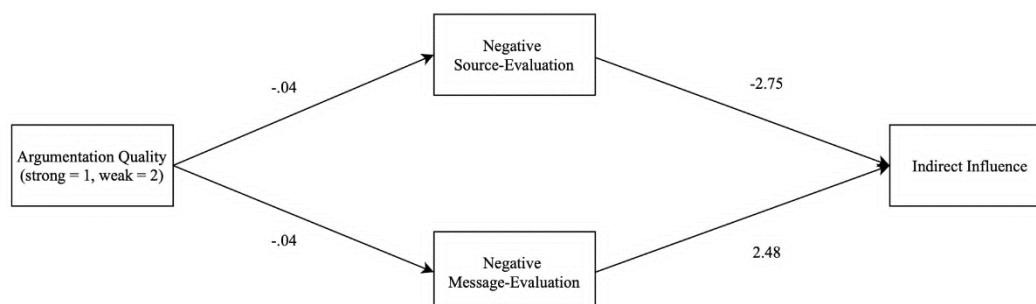
Figure 1b. *Parallel multiple mediation analysis of Argumentation Quality on Indirect Influence through negative source & message evaluation for minority conditions. Unstandardized OLS regression path coefficients are shown*

* p < .01
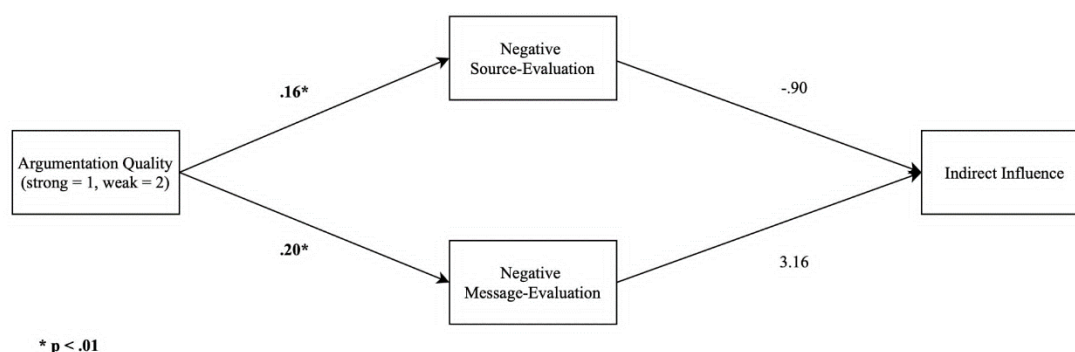
The reduced indirect influence in the weak minority argumentation condition is associated with increased negative evaluation of both the source (b = .16 [.039 .283], SE = .061, p = .01) and the message (b = .20 [.074 .328], SE = .063, p = .01), compared to the strong minority argumentation condition.

General Discussion

With the two experiments we presented, we attempted to interlink the tradition of persuasion with that of social influence in order to highlight similarities and differences in terms of their basic theoretical and methodological assumptions and thus shed light on the comparative advantages of each tradition, illuminating different aspects of majority and minority influence.

We clearly reintroduced the fundamental, as it turns out, distinction between direct and indirect influence, and utilized the classical variables of source numerical status and argumentation quality. We attempted to explore the effect of thought-listing on exerted influence, assuming that as a process in itself, it privileges central message elaboration (Experiment 1), and contrasted it with the process of source-message evaluation, which we consider to capture the mechanisms of social comparison and validation (Experiment 2). It is the first time that the "direct-indirect" influence distinction is combined with the cognitive process variable, which highlights the dynamics that arise between the type of influence exerted and the way the receiver elaborates the message. The findings seem to justify our choice to utilise the existence or not of the thought list as an independent variable rather than as a fixed methodological recording procedure, which is an original contribution of the paper.

The two different types of elaboration were found to release different dynamics at different levels of influence. We found in both experiments that thought-listing induces the argument quality effect at the level of direct influence and that it generally facilitates indirect more than direct influence (Experiment 1). We also found that in the case of weak minority argumentation, thought-listing induced greater indirect influence compared to the composite source-message evaluation (Experiment 2). Regarding the absence of a source effect on thought-listing conditions, contradictory findings are recorded over time in ergography. In Experiment 2, our interest focuses on the comparison between two different sociocognitive processes, originating, as we have emphasized, from the two major research traditions. The destructive effect of source assessment on weak minority arguments, both compared to minority strong and compared to majority weak ones is predicted by the genetic model of influence. The same holds for the comparatively greater influence of minority argument patients in the thought-list condition.

The weak minority argumentation turned out to be highly vulnerable to the source-message association, which was made possible by the corresponding task. This finding supports our claim that weak arguments have a potentially conflictual character, which only in the case of minority support leads to the emergence of psychologization (Papastamou, 1983, 1986), which is known to be the only effective resistance strategy at the level of indirect minority influence (Papastamou, et al., 2017). This is exactly what the increased negative evaluation of both the source and the message indicates, which appeared to mediate the argument quality effect in the exerted minority indirect influence.

Our experimental findings seem to support our attempt to (re)build bridges between different approaches to the phenomena of majority and minority influence.

We consider that future research directions could usefully be directed towards more creative uses of the thought-listing technique. It would be useful, for example, to analyse the verbal material produced in a more qualitative way. The mapping and identification of different thematic references we believe would highlight multiple mechanisms involved in the socio-cognitive processing of an influence process. It is one thing, for example, to simply reproduce the source's arguments rather than generate new ones, or it is another thing to refer to attributes of the source rather than focusing on the explicit content of the message in order to support or deny it. In a similar way, focusing only on the content of the message is different from referring to the broader subject matter. Reversely, thought-listing could be used through experimental manipulations regarding its thematic focus: source vs message vs focal issue at stake. A research option that could potentially contribute to uncovering the how and why of direct and indirect influence. Furthermore, the orientation of the receivers' cognitive process to their estimated or anticipated reaction of the majority of the potential recipients of the message would be another possible research option that would allow deepening the study of the third-person effect and further exploring its involvement in the outcome of the influence process.

The differential sensitivity shown by weak argumentation to different types of elaboration leads us to think that it would be also useful for future research to reconsider the distinction between strong and weak argumentation, in the sense of enriching their validation and assessment dimensions. An option like this would be a way to reactivate the societal reflection in the research approach to the influence phenomena. We refer specifically to the use of differential evaluative dimensions of the terms "majority" and "minority" corresponding to the meanings potentially given to the two fundamental terms and serving as underlying parameters of their perceived persuasiveness (consensus conventionality conformism, modesty banality, originality, extremity, marginality, riskiness, rebelliousness).

As has already been pointed out, the operationalisation of source status in terms other than the reference to numerical status would contribute to the same direction of highlighting the societal perspective. Experimental activation and recipient orientation in different thematic dimensions of source identity (social categorization, political affiliation, ideological background) would be an option that would not only increase the external validity

of our research but would also serve in practice the ever-present challenge of interconnecting the different levels of analysis.

We believe that the multi-layered knowledge accumulated thanks to the contribution of different research traditions on social influence has brought us to a point of attempting to try again to reconstruct the individual pieces and to look for new ways of synthesis with an eye on complementarity.

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Προς μια σύνθεση διαφορετικών προσεγγίσεων της κοινωνικής επιρροής: από τη λίστα σκέψεων στην αξιολόγηση πηγής-μηνύματος.

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Αυτό το άρθρο επιχειρεί να συνεισφέρει στη σύγκλιση δύο διαφορετικών προσεγγίσεων της κοινωνικής επιρροής, εκείνης που βασίζεται στην εργογραφία της πειθούς και εκείνης που βασίζεται στο γενετικό μοντέλο κοινωνικής επιρροής. Σκοπεύει επιπλέον να διαλευκάνει τις συνθήκες που επιδρούν στις περίπλοκες σχέσεις μεταξύ του καθεστώτος της πηγής (πλειονοτικής και μειονοτικής), του είδους ασκούμενης επιρροής (άμεσης και έμμεσης), του είδους επιχειρηματολογίας (ισχυρούς και ασθενούς), και των ψυχολογικών διαδικασιών (γνωστικής διεργασίας και επεξεργασίας σύγκρισης και επικύρωσης). Και στα δύο πειράματα, εκτός από τον χειρισμό του καθεστώτος της πηγής και της ποιότητας της επιχειρηματολογίας, χρησιμοποιήθηκε μια Τρίτη ανεξάρτητη μεταβλητή, η εισαγωγή (ή όχι) του έργου μιας λίστας σκέψης (Πείραμα 1) και η εισαγωγή διαφορετικών ψυχολογικών προσεγγίσεων της γνωστικής διεργασίας (μέσω του έργου της λίστας σκέψεων) ή της επεξεργασίας σύγκρισης και επικύρωσης (μέσω της αξιολόγησης πηγής-μηνύματος) (Πείραμα 2). Οι αναλύσεις έδειξαν ότι στο Πείραμα 1 οι συνθήκες απουσίας λίστας σκέψεων οδηγούσαν σε μεγαλύτερη άμεση επιρροή, ενώ οι συνθήκες λίστας σκέψεων οδηγούσαν σε μεγαλύτερη έμμεση επιρροή. Επίσης, η μειονοτική επιρροή ήταν μεγαλύτερη από την επιρροή της πλειοψηφίας. Στο Πείραμα 2, μόνο στις συνθήκες λίστας σκέψεων -όπως και στο Πείραμα 1- τα ισχυρά επιχειρήματα οδηγούσαν σε μεγαλύτερη άμεση επιρροή από ότι τα ασθενή. Ως προς την έμμεση επιρροή, σημαντικά αποτελέσματα εμφανίστηκαν μόνο για τη μειονότητα: τα ασθενή επιχειρήματα ασκούσαν μεγαλύτερη επιρροή στη συνθήκη της λίστας σκέψεων από ό,τι στη συνθήκη αξιολόγησης πηγής-μηνύματος, ενώ τα ισχυρά επιχειρήματα στη συνθήκη αξιολόγησης πηγής-μηνύματος. Η συζήτηση αυτών των ευρημάτων αποσκοπεί να συνδυάσει δύο τόσο διαφορετικές μεταξύ τους προσεγγίσεις της κοινωνικής επιρροής.