British Journal of Social Psychology (2003), 42, 319–335

www.bps.org.uk

On being loud and proud: Non-conformity and counter-conformity to group norms

Matthew J. Hornsey*, Louise Majkut, Deborah J. Terry and Blake M. McKimmie
University of Queensland, Australia

Most experiments on conformity have been conducted in relation to judgments of physical reality; surprisingly few papers have experimentally examined the influence of group norms on social issues with a moral component. In response to this, participants were told that they were either in a minority or in a majority relative to their university group in terms of their attitudes toward recognition of gay couples in law (Expt 1: $N = 205$) and a government apology to Aborigines (Expt 2: $N = 110$). In both experiments, it was found that participants who had a weak moral basis for their attitude conformed to the group norm on private behaviours. In contrast, those who had a strong moral basis for their attitude showed non-conformity on private behaviours and counter-conformity on public behaviours. Incidences of non-conformity and counter-conformity are discussed with reference to theory and research on normative influence.

> Not only is there widespread consensus among many diagnosticians of the climate of our times that this is an age of conformity; the relevant psychological literature is almost unanimous in its emphasis on conditions accounting for conformity. Actually, there is, of course, ample evidence for the existence of independence not only in common-sense observations but also in every single experiment which rejects the null-hypothesis of independence . . . There is a tacit implication in many of these experiments that those insubordinate subjects who are outside the hypothesis-confirming majority are a nuisance (Jahoda, 1959, p. 99).

In the above quote, Jahoda (1959) criticizes the over-emphasis placed in the psychological literature on themes of conformity, an emphasis that obscures the reality of non-conformity and counter-conformity. This sentiment was later reinforced by Moscovici and colleagues (e.g. Moscovici, 1976; Moscovici & Faucheux, 1972), who made a concerted effort to shine a stronger theoretical light on the reality of activism, deviance, and dissent. However, over 40 years following Jahoda's comments, we still know far more about group conformity than we do about the psychological processes underlying group defiance.

*Requests for reprints should be addressed to Matthew Hornsey, School of Psychology, University of Queensland, St Lucia 4072, Queensland, Australia (e-mail: m.hornsey@psy.uq.edu.au).

In this paper we examine some conditions under which we might expect defiance, rather than compliance, to group norms. Central to this paper is a critical examination of normative influence; that is, the notion that people are more likely to conform to group norms in public than in private because they are motivated to avoid social censure. It is argued that, although fear of social censure is a real phenomenon, there are circumstances where people's need to be right might override their need to be accepted. Specifically, where people have a strong moral basis for their attitude, they might treat public actions as a way of converting other group members to their view, or of reinforcing their privately held sense of self. It is possible that previous work has not identified this dynamic because it has examined attitudes regarding physical reality (e.g. judging line lengths) that are morally neutral. In the experiments in this study we examine how the moral basis of an attitude can moderate the influence of group norms, and demonstrate some evidence for counter-conformity on public behavioural intentions. First, however, we review theory and evidence relating to conformity and independence.

Informational and normative influence

People do not always make decisions in isolation; rather they look to others to guide their thoughts and actions (e.g. Asch, 1952; Festinger, 1950; Sherif, 1936; Sherif & Sherif, 1964; Turner, 1991). In looking to others, people might pay attention to two factors. First, they might be interested in what society says they *should* do or think in a situation. These rules or beliefs about what is appropriate in a situation may stem from family, church, significant others, or be embedded in the deeper moral fabric of society (e.g. one should not steal). The second factor that might be taken into account is what people *actually* do or think in a situation. Do other people share your opinion? How do others behave? Are you in a majority or in a minority? Information about what is typical or common is referred to as the descriptive norm (see Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990), and it is this type of norm that we examine here.

There is still some debate about why descriptive norms might affect people's attitudes and behaviours. On the one hand, people might be uncertain about what to think and do in a situation. Under these circumstances, people might rely on others to determine what is correct, particularly if the reference group is seen to be motivated and competent. This form of influence–referred to as *informational influence*–is not an irrational process; rather, it is a functional way of defining a position in the face of limited information. Informational influence is internalized by the individual and, it is assumed, leads to genuine attitude change.

Alternatively, descriptive norms might influence people to the extent that they want to ' fit in' with the majority. This form of influence–labelled *normative influence*–does not imply genuine attitude change, but rather a strategic effort on behalf of an individual to be accepted and to avoid social censure. This form of influence is predicated on the assumption that a minority position is aversive; it can lead to hostility, disapproval, or rejection from others. To avoid such social punishment, people might be motivated to conform to the majority position in public regardless of what opinion they hold privately.[1]

[1] *In this paper we have drawn a distinction between normative and informational influence (the dual-process model). It should be noted, however, that advocates of self-categorization theory have challenged whether the distinction between informational and normative influence is tenable (e.g. Turner, 1991), arguing instead for a single-process model.*

Evidence for normative influence

Several studies have examined the extent to which conformity to group norms is driven by a desire to avoid social censure. This has been done by comparing people's public behaviours and their private behaviours. The assumption is that normative influence will cause changes in public but not in private behaviours. Informational influence, on the other hand, is assumed to cause change in private behaviours as well.

In one of the original investigations of this issue, Deutsch and Gerard (1955) assessed conformity in relation to a perceptual accuracy task using a variation of the Asch paradigm. In this study participants were required to judge the relative length of two lines. Unknown to the participants, some of the respondents were stooges who were instructed to give the wrong answer. Participants responded either in an anonymous setting or, as in the original Asch experiments, in a face-to-face setting. Compared to a control condition, participants in the anonymous condition showed greater levels of conformity, suggesting informational influence. In the face-to-face condition, however, conformity was greater again, suggesting that the pressure to comply to the majority position was also an important factor. Using Asch-style paradigms, a similar pattern of results was demonstrated by Abrams, Wetherell, Cochrane, Hogg, and Turner (1990) and by Insko, Drenan, Solomon, Smith, and Wade (1983). They found that people conformed to in-group members' responses in both public and private conditions, although the effect was stronger again when the responses were made public.

A separate but related tradition of research has examined people's willingness to speak out in the face of majority opposition. Much of this work has been designed to test Noelle-Neumann's (1974, 1993) spiral of silence theory, which can be interpreted as an application of the notion of normative influence to the domain of attitude expression. Proponents of spiral of silence theory argue that people will be deterred from expressing their true opinion if they feel that it runs counter to the majority opinion. The theory is based on the assumption that expressing a minority opinion is anxiety-provoking because it raises the possibility of social isolation. Furthermore, it is argued that avoiding social isolation is often more important to people than holding to one's true opinion. As a result, when people are in a minority, they will feel pressure to either keep quiet or to conform to the majority opinion in public. Through this process minority positions become increasingly marginalized while majority positions carry more and more authority and legitimacy.

Some support has been found for this theory. For example, Salwen, Lin, and Matera (1994) examined people's willingness to speak out on the issue of whether English should be the official language of the US. They found that the more people anticipated that others held a different opinion to their own, the less willing they were to get into a conversation with a person holding a different opinion to their own. A meta-analysis of 17 studies found tentative support overall for the spiral of silence theory (Glynn, Hayes, & Shanahan, 1997), with a significant correlation between perceptions of opinion support and willingness to speak out. However, the correlation was extremely small ($r = .054$), raising questions as to the robustness of the phenomenon.

Evidence against normative influence

One limitation of the spiral of silence argument–and, by extension, the notion of normative influence–is the continued existence of robust and vocal minorities who

have fought to change the *status quo* in the face of explicit opposition (see also Moscovici, 1976). Shamir (1997), for example, examined the willingness of Israelis to speak out about the future of the Palestinian territories, an issue that is of deep and direct personal relevance. Under such circumstances, it can be argued that the need to express one's cherished values will override the fear of social isolation. Consistent with this notion, Shamir found that ' doves' and ' hawks' in Israel were as willing–or even more willing–to speak out about the future of the Palestinian territories when the prevailing government was in opposition to their views than when the government was sympathetic to their views.

In a similar vein, Frideres, Warner, and Albrecht (1971) asked people to rate their attitudes toward legalization of marijuana. Participants were told either that their vote would be disclosed via various mass media throughout the state (public condition) or that it would not (private condition). As expected, when participants were placed in a group whose attitudes were inconsistent with their own, attitude-behaviour consistency was significantly reduced. Unexpectedly, however, the extent to which people voted in line with their attitude did not differ across the private and public conditions.

How can we account for the fact that, in some studies at least, group influence is no greater in public than in private? One possible reason is that people's desire to be accepted may be cancelled out by their desire to defend a deeply held conviction. If this is the case, normative influence should be weaker on issues of social or moral importance than on judgments of physical reality (see Crutchfield, 1955, for a similar argument). Indeed, when one looks at the pattern of data in the literature, there is some evidence for this notion. Interestingly, all the studies that have demonstrated greater conformity in public (i.e. Abrams *et al.*, 1990; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Insko *et al.*, 1983) used paradigms involving judgments about physical reality (e.g. making judgments about the length of lines). It is possible that in paradigms such as these, the need to be accepted outweighs the need to be right. The studies that have shown no support for normative influence (Frideres *et al.*, 1971; Shamir, 1997) have been conducted using issues with a social and moral dimension. Where people are faced with the opinions of others on morally tinged issues (as opposed to physical reality), it can be argued that the need to be right balances or even outweighs the need to belong. Jahoda (1959) hinted at a similar argument when she wrote: ' To the extent that the experimental literature is largely limited to manipulating conditions of influence with regard to matters in which the individual has no investment, it now becomes understandable why we know in psychology so much more about conformity than about independence' (p. 104).

The notion that the moral basis for an attitude might influence how people respond to group norms finds some support from research on attitude–behaviour relations. Specifically, there is growing evidence that when people feel a moral compulsion to behave in a certain way, there is a stronger link between their attitudes and their behaviour (see Manstead, 2000, for a review). Although this assumption has not been tested experimentally, one can draw the conclusion that people with a strong moral basis for their attitude might be less influenced by group norms than would those with a weak moral basis for their attitude. This proposition also finds support in Sherif and Hovland's (1961) social judgment theory, which proposes that people who are highly involved in a particular issue are positively influenced by fewer people than are those who are uninvolved.

In two experiments, we examine experimentally how the moral basis of an individual's attitude can moderate his or her responses to group norms. In Expt 1 we did this

by examining the influence of group norms on attitudes to gay law reform. In Expt 2 we used the question of whether the Australian government should formally apologize to Aborigines for historical atrocities. In these experiments we were particularly interested in examining the factors that might lead to counter-conformity as opposed to other forms of group influence.

EXPERIMENT 1

In Expt 1, pro-gay law reform students were given information that, on the whole, students from their university either agreed or disagreed with their attitudinal position. They then completed a questionnaire assessing their willingness to engage in public and private behaviours consistent with their original attitude. We predicted that people would be more likely to act in line with their attitude in private when they had group support than when they had no group support for their attitude. This is consistent with previous research showing that, when there is ambiguity about what to do or think in a situation, people look to others as a source of information (e.g. Asch, 1952; Sherif, 1936; Turner, 1991).

It was unclear, however, what we might expect on the public behaviours. On the basis of research using the Asch paradigm (Abrams *et al.*, 1990; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Insko *et al.*, 1983), we might expect greater conformity on public behaviours than on private behaviours. We conjecture, however, that on issues with a moral component (e.g. gay law reform) people may choose to use the public domain to reassert their original position in the face of majority opposition. One possibility is that this process will cancel out any perceived pressure to comply, meaning that people will conform no more in public than in private. A stronger form of this hypothesis is that the motivation to present one's position publicly may outweigh fears of social isolation, resulting in non-conformity or even counter-conformity.

In addition to these basic predictions, we also explore the moderating influence of whether or not people have a strong moral basis for their attitudes. Empirical and theoretical work on attitude–behavioural relations (Manstead, 2000), conformity (Crutchfield, 1955), and social judgments (Sherif & Hovland, 1961) lend support to the notion that people might be more resistant to group norms when their attitudes have a moral dimension. To examine this, we obtained measures of the extent to which people have a moral basis for their attitude before exposing them to information about whether or not they had group support for their position. Overall, we expected an interaction between group support and moral basis, such that participants with a weak moral basis to their attitude would assimilate to the group norms, and those with a strong moral basis for their attitude would show non-conformity or even counter-conformity.

Method

Participants

For reasons of simplicity, the current experiment focused only on participants who held a position contrary to the *status quo*; that is, pro-gay law reform participants. As well as helping to simplify the design of the studies, there is a theoretical reason for choosing only participants who opposed the *status quo*. This is because many of the behaviours that we seek to predict relate to protest action (e.g. distributing leaflets,

attending rallies, writing letters to the editor). These behaviours make far less sense for the individual who advocates a position already supported by legislation.

Two hundred and eighty introductory psychology students participated in the experiment in return for course credit. Upon arrival, participants were first required to rate their attitudes on three issues: legalization of marijuana, mandatory sentencing of repeat criminal offenders, and recognition of gay couples in law (1=strongly support, 6=strongly oppose). The issues of legalization of marijuana and mandatory sentencing were included so as to reduce the transparency of the study. Of the overall sample, 205 identified themselves as being pro-gay law reform (scoring 3 or lower) and these people were retained for the experiment. The sample consisted of 152 females and 53 males (M=19.88 years). The 75 anti-gay law reform students were given a questionnaire relating to a different research topic, and their data are not reported here.

Materials and procedure

Pre-manipulation measures

After indicating their position on gay law reform, participants rated the extent to which they had a moral basis for their attitude. *Moral basis* was assessed using three items: ' To what extent do you feel your opinion is morally correct?', ' To what extent do you feel your position is based on strong personal principles?', and ' To what extent do you feel your position on gay law reform is a moral stance?' (1=not at all, 9=very much; α=.73). We also included an 8-item measure of perceived societal support (e.g. ' To what extent do you feel your opinion on gay law reform is representative of people in general?', ' To what extent do you feel society agrees with your opinion?'; 1=not at all, 9=very much; α=.89). Although this variable was not central to our research question, we were concerned that participants' pre-manipulation ideas about the level of societal support for their attitude might have a large impact on intentions to behave, and might also affect the extent to which the manipulations were seen to be legitimate. By covarying this variable out of the analyses, we were able to examine the impact of moral basis and group norm over and above pre-existing perceptions of societal support.

Manipulation of group norm

Group norm was manipulated using a method that has been used previously by White, Hogg, and Terry (2002). Participants were told that the study was part of a wider programme of research investigating the attitudes of University of Queensland (UQ) students on various issues. They were then presented with three graphs ostensibly summarizing the results of the surveys for the last three years. Although there were some minor variations between the three graphs, the pattern of results was similar. In all cases, UQ students were reported to be evenly divided on the issues of legalization of marijuana and mandatory sentencing (i.e. approximately half of students in favour and half against). However, on the issue of recognition of gay couples in law, UQ students were portrayed to be either strongly in favour or strongly opposed. In the group support condition, participants were told that UQ students were strongly in favour of gay law reform across the three years (on average 85% support, 8% oppose, 7% undecided). In the group opposition condition, participants were told that UQ students were strongly opposed to gay law reform across the three years (on average 85% oppose, 8% support, 7% undecided). To ensure that the manipulation of

normative support was understood by the participants, participants ticked a box indicating whether UQ students mainly supported recognition of gay couples in law, mainly opposed the issue, or equally supported or opposed the issue. All participants correctly answered this manipulation check.

Dependent measures

Following manipulation of group norm, participants completed a dependent measures questionnaire assessing their willingness to act out their attitudes in the private and public domain. To measure private and public intentions, participants were asked to indicate how willing they would be to perform a number of activities provided they had the time and opportunity to do so (1=not at all willing, 9=very willing). Three private behaviours were included: signing a petition, voting in a referendum, and voting for a political party that had pro-gay law reform policies. The public behaviours were signing a letter to the editor, distributing information leaflets, and attending a rally in favour of gay law reform. Overall, the items reflecting private behaviours ($\alpha = .88$) and public behaviours ($\alpha = .88$) formed reliable scales. In all cases, questions were repeated to address also the issues of mandatory sentencing and legalization of marijuana, however, these measures were not analysed.

Results

Data analysis procedure

A series of multiple regressions was performed using participants' ratings of private and public intentions as criteria. In each case, measures of group norm and moral basis were entered as predictors along with the product term representing the interaction between these variables. Where the interaction terms were significant, simple slopes analysis was conducted in the manner recommended by Aiken and West (1991). In all analyses, we controlled for the effects of pre-manipulation perceptions of societal support.

Private intentions

On its own, group norm did not significantly impact on participants' private intentions, but there was a significant main effect of moral basis. Overall, participants intended to act in line with their attitudes the more they had a moral basis for their attitude, $\beta = .68$, $p < .001$. This main effect, however, was qualified by a significant interaction between group norm and moral basis, $\beta = -.20$, $p < .05$ (see Fig. 1). Analysis of simple slopes showed that participants who had a weak moral basis for their attitude were more intent on privately acting in line with their attitudes when they had group support than when they had group opposition, $\beta = .20$, $p < .05$ (conformity). For participants who had a strong moral basis for their attitude, however, group norm had no significant impact on private intentions, $\beta = -.08$, *ns* (non-conformity).

Public intentions

As for private intentions, people's intentions to publicly act in line with their attitudes were greater the stronger the moral basis for their attitude, $\beta = .56$, $p < .001$. This main effect, however, was qualified by a marginal interaction between group norm and moral basis, $\beta = .-17$, $p = .086$ (see Fig. 2). Those who had a weak moral basis for their

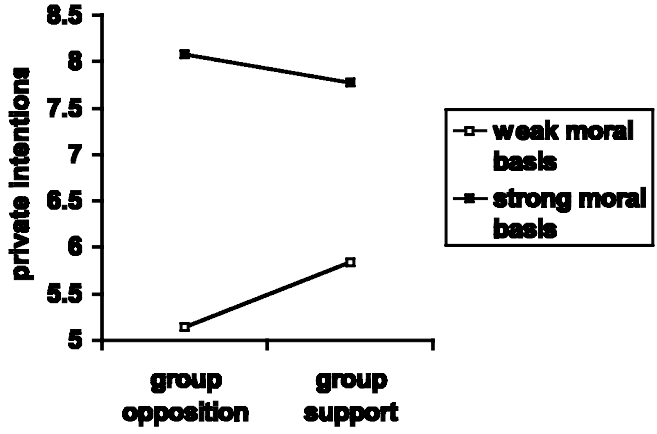

Figure 1. Private intentions as a function of moral basis and group norm: Expt 1.

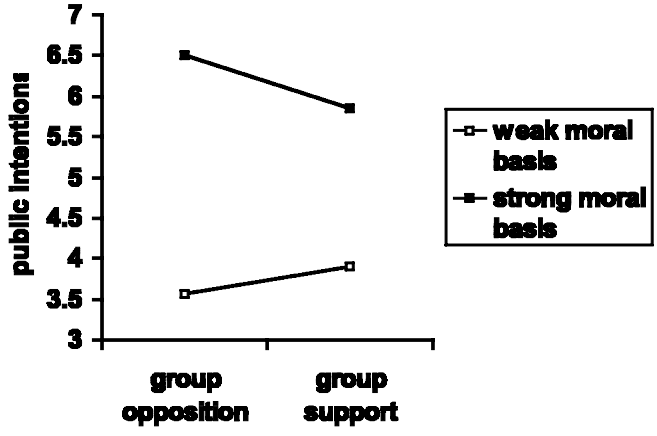

Figure 2. Public intentions as a function of moral basis and group norm: Expt 1.

attitude were not significantly affected by the group norm, $\beta = .08$, *ns*. In contrast, there was a marginal trend for participants who had a strong moral basis for their attitude to be more willing to act publicly in line with their attitudes when they had group opposition than when they had group support, $\beta = -.16$, $p = .085$ (counter-conformity).

The role of attitude strength

In summary, there is evidence that moral basis for attitude moderates responses to group norms. One problem, however, is that it is unclear whether the effects of moral basis are operating independently of attitude strength. Specifically, it could be that people who report a strong moral basis to their attitude are those who feel more strongly about the attitude, and it is attitude strength that is driving the effects. To test this, we used participants' responses on the original measure of the extent to which they supported gay law reform (1=strongly support, 6=strongly oppose) as an index of attitude strength. Because we had only pro-gay law reform participants, this translated to a 3-item scale of attitude strength. After including this variable in the regression

analyses, the interaction between moral basis and group norm remained significant for both private intentions, $\beta = -.18$, $p < .05$, and for public intentions, $\beta = -.16$, $p = .07$, suggesting that the effects of moral basis are not merely an artifact of attitude strength.

Discussion

The current paper argues that group norms can influence behaviour in different ways: just as people may sometimes be motivated to move toward the group norm, there may be situations in which people will resist the group norm or even move away from it. We proposed that one factor that might have a large impact on whether this is the case is the extent to which people have a weak or strong moral basis for their attitude. Consistent with this, we found that participants who had a weak moral basis for their attitude shifted toward the group norm in relation to their private behavioural intentions (conformity), whereas those who had a strong moral basis for their attitude were not affected by the group norm (non-conformity). Indeed, on measures of public behavioural intentions, there was even a trend among those who had a strong moral basis for their attitude towards counter-conformity; that is, stronger intentions when they perceived group opposition than when they perceived group support. Furthermore, the effects of moral basis for the attitude appear to emerge over and above the effects of attitude strength and perceived strength of societal support.

Contrary to much previous research (Abrams *et al.*, 1990; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Insko *et al.*, 1983), the current findings do not show more conformity in public than in private; indeed, levels of conformity in public were very low. One possible reason for this inconsistency is that studies demonstrating normative influence in public are traditionally conducted on attitudes that have little consequence for the self-concept (e.g. judgments about the length of lines). Under such circumstances, it is unlikely that conformity will violate one's personal belief system. However, on issues with a moral component, conformity to group norms might not be a legitimate option. In such situations, people may feel that it is important to be seen to be consistent with one's personal values.

Although promising, caution should be exercised in interpreting the current data. First, evidence for counter-conformity is relatively weak. Even for those with a strong moral basis for their attitude, there was only a marginally significant display of counter-conformity. Given that most previous literature has demonstrated assimilation to group norms, it is not surprising that the move away from a group norm should prove to be a relatively subtle effect. It does suggest, however, that the effect would benefit from replication, preferably in relation to a different social issue.

The second interpretational difficulty with Expt 1 is that it provides little insight into the nature of the psychological underpinnings of the effects. For example, Expt 1 is unable to address *why* people who have a strong moral basis for their attitude should move away from the group norm, and then only in public. One possibility is that people are using the public sphere to try to convert the group; in other words they are engaging in persuasion. In Expt 2 we tested this possibility by measuring the need to convert, and testing whether it mediates the effects of group norm.

A third limitation of Expt 1 is that there was a dissociation between the level at which the norm is manipulated (UQ) and the level at which the behaviour was measured (the general public). Specifically, the public behaviours used in the study did not imply that other group members would be the audience; rather, they referred to

behaviours with a generalized audience. A more complete test of the pressure to comply (provided in Expt 2) focused on behaviours that are acted out in front of other group members.

Finally, Expt 2 was designed to engage more directly with the social identity perspective on group influence. According to self-categorization theory (e.g. Hogg & Turner, 1987; Turner, 1991, 1999; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), when a relevant social identity is activated, people perceptually accentuate differences between members of their group and members of other groups, and accentuate similarities between the self and other group members. The more a person identifies with the group, the more they view themselves and other group members as interchangeable exemplars of the group prototype, a process referred to as ' depersonalization'. This process is assumed to underpin processes of group influence and conformity. On the surface, the evidence of non-conformity and counter-conformity found in Expt 1 might seem inconsistent with the social identity perspective on group influence. However, this is not necessarily the case. It was never intended that self-categorization theory would portray people as automatons, mindlessly assimilating to the norms and values of whichever group is activated by an experimenter. Rather, the theory argues that people actively weigh up whether the group is a relevant reference point in a particular situation. From the social identity perspective, a key factor influencing the extent to which people conform to group norms is the level of identification the participant has with the group, and the extent to which the group is salient. The more a person identifies with a salient group, the more the group will be a relevant frame of reference for that person, and the more they are likely to assimilate to the group's values. Using self-categorization theory as a framework, we measured identification in Expt 2 to see how this variable might influence behavioural intentions.

EXPERIMENT 2

UQ students who supported a government apology to Aborigines were given information that, on the whole, students from their university either agreed or disagreed with their position. They then completed a questionnaire assessing their willingness to engage in public and private behaviours consistent with their original attitude. So as to link the group norm with the behaviour, public behaviours were measured in terms of participants' willingness to express their attitudes to other UQ students. To help clarify some of the psychological underpinnings of the effects, identification was measured prior to the manipulation of group norm, and the need to convert was measured post-manipulation.

In light of Expt 1, it was predicted that participants with a weak moral basis for their attitude would express more of an intention to behave in line with their attitude when they had group support than when they had group opposition. In contrast, it was expected that participants who had a strong moral basis for their attitude would show no assimilation to the group norm. Specifically, it was expected that these people would show non-conformity in private and counter-conformity in public. In addition to this basic prediction, we ran a series of regressions to examine the processes underlying counter-conformity in more detail. One research question related to the extent to which the need to convert would be instrumental in driving counter-conformity in public. On the basis of the conversion explanation for counter-conformity, we expected that any move away from the group norm on public behaviours would disappear when the need to convert was entered in the design. Finally, to consider

social identity processes, we examined how group identification affects responses to normative information. Specifically, we expected that counter-conformity in public would emerge only for low identifiers; in contrast, we expected that high identifiers would show more of a tendency to assimilate to the group norm.

Method

Participants

The participants were 166 introductory psychology students who participated in the experiment in return for course credit. Of the overall sample, 110 identified themselves as being in favour of a government apology to Aborigines and so were retained for the experiment. The sample consisted of 72 females and 38 males (M=19.53 years).

Materials and procedure

Pre-manipulation measures

After indicating their initial attitude, participants rated the extent to which they had a moral basis for their attitude using the same three items used in Expt 1 (α=.78). We also measured the extent to which participants identified with UQ using a 4-item scale (α=.91) adapted from Brown, Condor, Matthews, Wade, and Williams (1986). Finally, as in Expt 1, we included a measure of the extent to which people perceived societal support for their attitude (α=.82).

Manipulation of group norm

Using the same paradigm described in Expt 1, group norm was manipulated by telling participants that UQ students were either strongly in favour or strongly opposed to a government apology to Aborigines. Following exposure to this information, eight participants incorrectly reported the extent to which UQ students agreed with the issue, and so were removed from all analyses.

Post-manipulation measures

Following manipulation of the group norm, participants rated the extent to which they felt a need to convince other UQ students that their personal opinion was correct, and the extent to which they felt the need to convert other UQ students to their view. These items were combined into a single scale measuring the need to convert (α=.93). Private behavioural intentions were measured using the same items used in Expt 1 (α=.88). Public behavioural intentions were measured by giving participants two scenarios. In the first scenario, participants were told to imagine that they were on a bus talking to a UQ student when the issue of apologizing to Aborigines arose. In the second scenario, they were in a tutorial when somebody raised the issue of a government apology to Aborigines. In each case, participants were told that the expressed opinions of the other person were the opposite of their own. After reading each scenario, participants used a 9-point bipolar scale to rate the extent to which they would be willing to express their true attitude on apologizing to Aborigines (1=very unwilling, 9=very willing). These two items were combined into a single scale of public behaviours (α=.63).

Results

Data analysis procedure

As in Expt 1, a series of multiple regressions was performed using participants' ratings of private and public intentions as criteria. In each case, perception of societal support

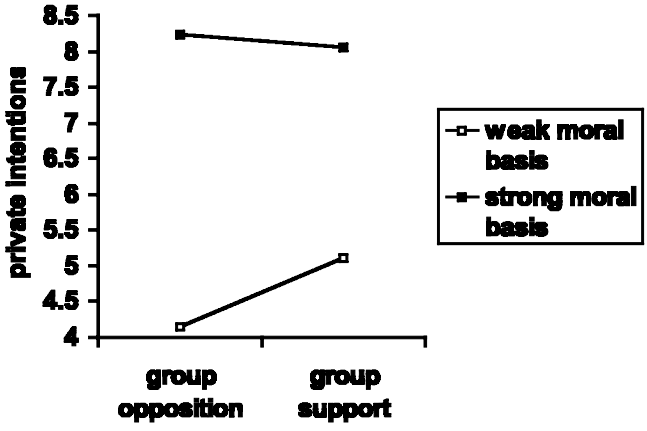

Figure 3. Private intentions as a function of moral basis and group norm: Expt 2.

was included as a control variable. Measures of group norm and moral basis were then entered as predictors, along with the interaction terms for these variables. Significant interaction terms were followed up with analysis of simple slopes.

Private intentions

A main effect of moral basis was qualified by an interaction between moral basis and group norm, $\beta = -.22$, $p < .05$ (see Fig. 3). Simple slopes analysis revealed that, where participants had a strong moral basis for their attitude, group norm had no effect on their intentions to engage in private behaviours, $\beta = -.04$, *ns* (non-conformity). In contrast, where people had a weak moral basis for their attitude, behavioural intentions were stronger when they had group support than when they had group opposition, $\beta = .25$, $p < .05$ (conformity). This effect mirrors the effect reported in Expt 1.

Public intentions

On public intentions, the effects of moral basis and group norm were tested before and after entering the proposed mediator: need to convert. As for private intentions, a main effect of moral basis was qualified by a marginal interaction between moral basis and group norm, $\beta = -.26$, $p = .075$. Contrary to expectations, after including the need to convert, the interaction term remained marginally significant, $\beta = -.26$, $p = .083$ (see Fig. 4). Simple slopes analysis revealed that, where participants had a weak moral basis for their attitude, group norm had no effect on their intentions to engage in public behaviours, $\beta = .12$, *ns*. In contrast, where people had a strong moral basis for their attitude, public behavioural intentions were marginally stronger when they had group opposition than when they had group support; in other words, there was some evidence for counter-conformity, $\beta = -.23$, $p = .082$. Again, this pattern resembles the effect observed in Expt 1.

According to self-categorization theory, counter-conformity should occur only among those who have weak identification with the reference group. To test whether this is the case, a second regression was performed on public intentions, this time with measures of identification included as a predictor. In line with predictions, a three-way

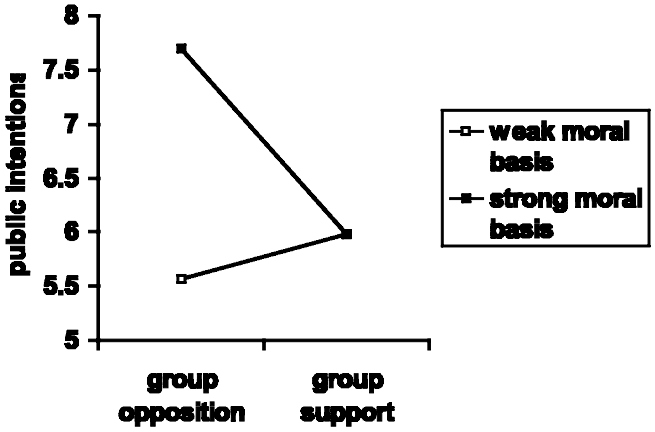

Figure 4. Public intentions as a function of moral basis and group norm: Expt 2.

interaction emerged between identification, moral basis, and group norm, $\beta = .23$, $p < .05$. As expected, follow-up analyses revealed a significant interaction between group norm and moral basis for low identifiers, $\beta = -.62$, $p < .01$, but not for high identifiers, $\beta = .30$, *ns*. Analysis of simple slopes demonstrated that low identifiers who had a strong moral basis for their attitude intended to publicly act in line with their attitude more when they had group opposition than when they had group support, $\beta = -.53$, $p < .01$ (i.e. counter-conformity). In contrast, low identifiers who had a weak moral basis for their attitude were not significantly affected by the group norm, $\beta = .30$, *ns*.

The role of attitude strength

As in Expt 1, participants' original attitude scores were included in the analyses as measures of attitude strength. After including this variable in the regression analyses, the interaction between moral basis and group norm remained marginally significant on private intentions, $\beta = -.17$, $p = .079$. Furthermore, the three-way interaction between identification, moral basis, and group norm remained significant, $\beta = .26$, $p < .01$. Thus, as in Expt 1, the effects of moral basis appeared to be independent of attitude strength.

Discussion

The effects of moral basis on responses to group norms were remarkably similar across Expts 1 and 2. As in Expt 1, the data for Expt 2 showed that people with a weak moral basis for their attitude were more intent on privately demonstrating their support for a government apology to Aborigines when they were in a majority with respect to their group than when they were in a minority. This finding reinforces a large amount of theory and literature demonstrating that people use group norms as a guide to what to think and how to behave.

For those with a strong moral basis to their attitude, however, the effects of group norms did not play out in the same way. Rather than assimilating to the group norm, these people showed as much intent to act privately in line with their attitude when they faced group opposition as when they faced group support. In line with Expt 1,

there was also evidence that those with a strong moral basis for their attitude were more determined to publicly act out their attitudes when they had group opposition than when they had group support. When taken in conjunction with Expt 1, this counter-conformity appears to be a relatively consistent, if subtle, effect. The findings of Expt 2 are particularly convincing because, unlike Expt 1, they were measured with respect to behaviours conducted in front of other group members. Furthermore, as in Expt 1, it is clear that the effects of moral basis operate independently of attitude strength.

Why is it that people with a strong moral basis for their attitude should show counter-conformity? Why not ignore the group norm altogether? One possibility is that people remain committed to the group, but are motivated to change the attitudes of others through public displays of minority action. In other words, rather than assimilating to the group norm, it could be that people are attempting to shift the group culture to fit their personal values, or the values of a different, more self-relevant group. Interestingly, however, there was no direct evidence for such a process. Indeed, where the motivation to convert others was taken into account, the interaction between moral basis and group norm was unchanged.

A second possible explanation is that, when people discover that the group's values are inconsistent with theirs, they discount the group's norms as a relevant reference point. In other words, group members with a minority view might psychologically detach from the group and reconfigure their group identities along ideological lines (i.e. in line with the pro- and anti-apology positions). Thus, counter-conformity may, in fact, represent decategorization from the existing group and assimilation to the norms and values of a different group. Without data relating to the underlying categorization process, we cannot draw any conclusions about whether this is the case. However, from a self-categorization perspective, it might be expected that this process of re-identification with another group would only emerge among those who already had a low level of commitment to the UQ group. Consistent with this explanation, only low identifiers with a strong moral basis for their attitude showed counter-conformity; indeed, for low identifiers, evidence for counter-conformity was relatively strong. In contrast, there was no evidence of counter-conformity among high identifiers.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

To date, the bulk of our knowledge about conformity stems from people's judgments about physical reality (e.g. judging line lengths). From this research, there is a general consensus that people are motivated to move toward the majority position. In some cases, this may be a rational response to uncertainty. People do not always hold their attitudes with complete assurance; there is sometimes an element of doubt, or a suspicion that one has not availed oneself of all the information necessary to formulate a correct position. In this situation, people may look to others in an effort to determine the correct attitudinal position (informational influence). However, there is also evidence that people conform more in public than in private (Abrams *et al.*, 1990; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Insko *et al.*, 1983). This suggests that at least part of the motivation to conform is about being liked or accepted by the group (normative influence). People conform to the majority even when they know the majority position to be wrong, because this is a way of avoiding unwelcome attention.

In this paper, we reflect critically on the notion that people are motivated to assimilate to group norms in public for strategic reasons. When conformity is measured

with respect to judgments of physical stimuli, the psychological costs associated with letting go of one's personal view may be relatively small next to the benefits that accrue from fitting in. However, when conformity is measured with respect to judgments of attitudes with a moral dimension, the costs to one's personal integrity may be considerably higher. Rather than showing assimilation to the group norm, we find remarkably little movement toward the group on two attitudes that have moral significance. Furthermore, we find evidence that those with a strong moral basis to their attitude intended to react *against* the group norm on public behaviours. Thus, the current data suggest that the influence of group norms on members' attitudes toward moral issues might be less universal than it would seem on the basis of experiments that use judgments of physical stimuli.

One striking aspect of both experiments is the low levels of conformity found on public intentions overall. Contrary to the notion of normative influence, we found less evidence for conformity in public than in private; indeed, if anything, people reacted *against* the group norm in public. In Expt 2, we ruled out the need to convert as the psychological underpinning of this behaviour. What is it, then, about the public arena that leads to counter-conformity?

A feasible explanation is provided by Tice (1992), who argued that public acts of defiance are driven by the need to define the self and to remind the self of one's cherished values. Tice argued that public behaviours communicate information not just to others but also to the self. Individuals can use self-presentation to construct an identity, but this may also reflect back on the self-concept. By publicly aligning themselves with an attitude, people are able to remind themselves as well as other people what they stand for. Paradoxically, then, it is in public that questions of self-identity and self-definition become particularly salient. Thus, where people's personal values are inconsistent with those of their reference group, individuals are faced with a dilemma. Although public acts of defiance might risk ridicule or rejection, public acts of conformity might do the greatest damage to one's sense of self. One might expect that people's response to this conflict would depend on their pre-existing level of identification with the group. High identifiers might balance their need for self-definition with their need to remain loyal to, and accepted by, the group. In contrast, low identifiers have less to lose by making a public stand in opposition to the group norm. In Expt 2, we find some preliminary evidence for this. Consistent with the social identity perspective, counter-conformity emerged strongly among low identifiers with a strong moral basis for their attitude, but not at all among high identifiers. This provides broad support for the notion that identity issues are central in understanding counter-conformity as well as conformity.

We acknowledge that the current studies are limited in the sense that they measure behavioural intentions rather than actual behaviours. One problem with interpreting results on behavioural intentions is that people may be responding in terms of how they would like to behave, rather than how they actually would behave. This is not to say that intentions are not important constructs; to the contrary, they provide valuable insight into people's self-expectations. However, it is possible that, in using measures of intentions, we could be underestimating the extent to which people do inhibit public behaviours in order to fit in.

Despite this caveat, we view the current data as a counterpoint to the emphasis in the social psychological literature on conformity. In line with Jahoda (1959), we hope that this study might make researchers more conscious of the nature of their paradigms when studying conformity. By using real-world social issues rather than judgments of

physical stimuli, theorists may be in a better position to examine themes of non-conformity and counter-conformity, and may be more sensitive to how these themes play out in the context of moral or ideological struggle.

Acknowledgements

This paper was supported by a grant awarded to the third author by the Australian Research Council. Thanks to Joanne Smith and Steven Cox for their assistance in designing the measures used in these studies.

References

Abrams, D., Wetherell, M. S., Cochrane, S., Hogg, M. A., & Turner, J. C. (1990). Knowing what to think by knowing who you are: Self-categorization and the nature of norm formation, conformity, and group polarization. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *29*, 97–119.

Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1991). *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions*. London: Sage.

Asch, S. E. (1952). Effects of group pressures upon the modification and distortion of judgments. In G. E. Swanson, T. M. Newcomb, & E. L. Hartley (Eds), *Readings in social psychology* (pp. 393–401). New York: Holt, Reinhart & Winston.

Brown, R., Condor, S., Matthews, A., Wade, G., & Williams, J. (1986). Explaining intergroup differentiation in an industrial organization. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, *59*, 273–286.

Cialdini, R. B., Reno, R. R., & Kallgren, C. A. (1990). A focus theory of normative conduct: Recycling the concept of norms to reduce littering in public places. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *58*, 1015–1026.

Crutchfield, R. (1955). Conformity and character. *American Psychologist*, *10*, 191–198.

Deutsch, M., & Gerard, H. (1955). A study of normative and informational social influences upon individual judgment. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, *51*, 629–636.

Festinger, L. (1950). Informal social communication. *Psychological Review*, *63*, 181–194.

Frideres, J. S., Warner, L. G., & Albrecht, S. L. (1971). The impact of social constraints on the relationship between attitudes and behavior. *Social Forces*, *50*, 102–112.

Glynn, C. J., Hayes, A. F., & Shanahan, J. (1997). Perceived support for one's opinions and willingness to speak out: A meta-analysis of survey studies on the ' spiral of silence'. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *61*, 452–463.

Hogg, M. A., & Turner, J. C. (1987). Social identity and conformity: A theory of referent informational influence. In W. Doise & S. Moscovici (Eds), *Current issues in European social psychology* (Vol. 2, pp. 139–182). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Insko, C., Drenan, S., Solomon, M. R., Smith, R., & Wade, T. J. (1983). Conformity as a function of the consistency of positive self-evaluation with being liked and being right. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *19*, 341–358.

Jahoda, M. (1959). Conformity and independence. *Human Relations*, *12*, 99–120.

Manstead, A. S. R. (2000). The role of moral norm in the attitude-behavior relation. In D. J. Terry & M. A. Hogg (Eds), *Attitudes, behavior, and social context* (pp. 11–30). London: Erlbaum.

Moscovici, S. (1976). *Social influence and social change*. London: Academic Press.

Moscovici, S., & Faucheux, C. (1972). Social influence, conformity bias, and the study of active minorities. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, *6*, 149–202.

Noelle-Neumann, E. (1974). The spiral of silence: A theory of public opinion. *Journal of Communication*, *24*, 43–51.

Noelle-Neumann, E. (1993). *Spiral of silence: Public opinion-our social skin* (2nd ed.) Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Salwen, M. B., Lin, C., & Matera, F. R. (1994). Willingness to discuss ' official English': A test of three communities. *Journalism Quarterly*, *71*, 282–290.

Shamir, J. (1997). Speaking up and silencing out in face of a changing climate of opinion. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, *74*, 602–614.

Sherif, M. (1936). *The psychology of social norms*. New York: Harper and Row.

Sherif, M., & Hovland, C. I. (1961). *Social judgment: Assimilation and contrast effects in communication and attitude change*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Sherif, M., & Sherif, C. W. (1964). *Reference groups*. New York: Harper & Row.

Tice, D. M. (1992). Self-concept change and self-presentation: The looking glass self is also a magnifying glass. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *63*, 435–451.

Turner, J. C. (1991). *Social influence*. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Turner, J. C. (1999). Some current issues in research on social identity and self-categorization theories. In N. Ellemers, R. Spears, & B. Doosje (Eds), *Social identity: Context, commitment and content* (pp. 6–34). Oxford: Blackwell.

Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987). *Rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Oxford and New York: Blackwell.

White, K. M., Hogg, M. A., & Terry, D. J. (2002). Improving attitude-behavior correspondence through exposure to normative support from a salient ingroup. *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, *24*, 91–103.

Received 19 March 2001; revised version received 11 June 2002