



## The triadic legitimacy model: Understanding support to disobedient groups



Stefano Passini <sup>a,\*</sup>, Davide Morselli <sup>b,1</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Educazione, University of Bologna, Via Filippo Re, 6, 40126 Bologna, Italy*

<sup>b</sup> *Interdisciplinary Institute for the Study of Life Trajectories (ITB), University of Lausanne, CH-1015 Lausanne, Switzerland*

### A B S T R A C T

#### Keywords:

Obedience  
Disobedience  
Minority  
Social change  
Moral inclusion

In a social-psychological perspective, many scholars have argued that disobedience plays a significant role in avoiding the degeneration of the authority into autocracy and in promoting social change. In particular, the tripolar model (minority-majority-population) proposed by Mugny (1982) emphasized the role of the population for the stability or the progress of every society. Authority may indeed preserve the *status quo* only on the grounds of its influence on a large population. Likewise, protesters may achieve social change only by influencing and involving a large part of the population in their struggles. In understanding why people decide to join a protest, the aim of this article is to integrate Kelman and Hamilton's (1989) analysis of legitimacy with the tripolar model on social influence. The model we propose – namely the triadic legitimacy model (TLM) – explains the dialectic between social stability and social change by considering both authority's and disobedient groups' legitimacies.

© 2012 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

Democratic political systems are based on the notion of the “morality of political power” (Buchanan, 2002), that is political authority is not based on coercive power but on the legitimacy attributed to it by citizens. According to Buchanan (2002, p. 689), “an entity has political legitimacy if and only if it is morally justified in wielding political power.” That is, citizens should evaluate the legitimacy of political authority for determining under what conditions they should comply, or not comply, with its demands. Such legitimacy of democracy depends on two dimensions: on the one side the procedures must be democratic and respect the principle of equal political opportunity and accessibility; on the other the outcome and demands of the political authorities need to fulfill moral standards shaped on democratic principles and values, such as equality, fairness and freedom (Christiano, 2003). Unlike other

political regimes (e.g. dictatorships, oligarchies), democratic power always needs to formulate and fulfill these conditions which identify when the political authorities are morally justified in wielding power and when citizens have sufficient reasons to comply with the authority demands (Buchanan, 2002). Thus, in democracies citizens are entitled to the right and the duty to refuse to comply with the authority if its demands are no longer justified from the moral viewpoint (Lefkowitz, 2007; Markovits, 2005). According to Lane and Ersson (2003), democracy combines the rule of law with people's active participation in politics and protest. This combination is essential to modern democracy.

From a psychosocial perspective, Kelman and Hamilton (1989) have argued that disobedience plays a significant role in avoiding the degeneration of the authority into autocracy and in promoting social change (Moscovici, 1976; Nemeth, 2003). In this perspective, disobedience may be conceived of as an instrument of the community for controlling the legitimacy of the authority's demands, becoming a factor safeguarding against authoritarianism. It

\* Corresponding author. Tel.: +39 051 2091618.

E-mail addresses: [s.passini@unibo.it](mailto:s.passini@unibo.it) (S. Passini), [davide.morselli@unil.ch](mailto:davide.morselli@unil.ch) (D. Morselli).

<sup>1</sup> Tel.: +41(0)21 692 3854.

thus becomes relevant to strengthen norms that prescribe disobedience when people deal with orders and demands that they deem to be illegitimate, mainly on the grounds of a moral judgment (Kelman & Hamilton, 1989). In that sense, disobedience becomes not just a right of the citizen that a democratic system should provide but a duty of citizenship. It is worth noting that this kind of disobedience – which we will refer to as prosocial – is a concept not merely in opposition to that of obedience. That is, this disobedience recognizes the importance of obeying for the proper functioning of society whilst, at the same time, recognizing the limits of authority and their demands (Arendt, 1973; Fromm, 1963; Morselli, 2010; Passini & Morselli, 2009, 2010a). In other words, these prosocial disobedient people do not consider obeying the authority as negative; they disobey within particular contexts and against the specific authority's demands that breach the principle of equity among social groups.

This dynamic between obedience and disobedience goes beyond a mere opposition between the two concepts and suggests the importance of distinguishing different type of disobedience in regard to the authority and different types of social change. Indeed, not all social changes and disobedience are to be considered as a warranty of moral boundaries and respect for democratic principles, as civil and human rights. History teaches that most of autocratic social groups – which perpetrated atrocities toward some minorities with the aim of conquering and preserving power – presented themselves as disobedience groups. The main point we have tried to focus on in our past research (Morselli & Passini, 2010, 2011; Passini & Morselli, 2009, 2010a, 2011) is how to define different types of disobedience in relation to the social change they seek and the psychological dynamics they prompt. Elsewhere (Passini & Morselli, 2009), we have proposed and discussed a basic distinction between prosocial and antisocial disobedience, which will be summarized in the next paragraph.

### 1. Antisocial and prosocial disobedience

Differences and similarities between the Ku Klux Klan and the Civil Rights Movement in the Nineteen-Fifties and Sixties could help us to exemplify two basic and opposite sides of disobedience. Both movements were disobeying the law, both were contrasting the methods of the authority, both were demanding rights. So where does the difference lie? We argue that the main difference between the two movements lies in the psychosocial dynamics which led to the actions. While the Civil Rights Movement was seeking an extension of basic rights to those social groups that were deprived of them, the KKK wanted to maintain and to improve a differentiation of rights between groups. While the former asked for a reduction in social injustice and an improvement in the conditions of all the social groups, the latter addressed the improvement to just one social group (i.e. white Caucasian Protestants). Thus, we can define the Civil Rights Movement protest as prosocial disobedience in the sense that the social change that the Civil Rights Movement tried to achieve tended to maximize the benefits for all

the social components. By contrast, the KKK can be defined as antisocial, in the sense that the improvement in conditions the Klan wanted to achieve was not directed to society as a whole but to just one single social group, to the detriment of the others.

According to Habermas (1990), the inclusion of multiple viewpoints, such as those of opponent social groups, defines moral and democratic norms that are equally good for the social groups involved. On the contrary, when moral stances are decided according to the needs of a single social group, they risk failing to be universally acceptable. From an intraindividual rather than intergroup perspective, Carpendale (2000) has argued that framing moral issues into dialogical and inclusive processes is part of moral reasoning based on the capability of perspective-taking (Kohlberg, 1969) and resolving moral conflicts (Piaget, 1932). Facing moral dilemmas, people take different positions if they can equally weigh up other people's viewpoints (including the different viewpoints into their own moral reasoning), rather than choosing one viewpoint and excluding the others. That is, the capability to include different viewpoints and different positions is quintessential to overcoming moral dilemmas fairly and democratically. In a broader perspective, such a type of reasoning becomes a fundamental resource for communities because it allows for the overcoming of situations of zero-sum conflict (e.g. when the rights of certain group deny the rights of the opponent group).

On the grounds of some research (Passini & Morselli, 2010b, 2011), we therefore argue that moral inclusion (Opatow, 1990) represents a psychological threshold between prosocial and antisocial disobedience. Whereas prosocial disobedience is characterized by moral inclusion, antisocial disobedience is oriented toward the exclusion of certain viewpoints. Moral exclusion is indeed defined as excluding other individuals or groups from one's own "moral community" (Staub, 1989). In other words, viewing others as lying beyond the boundary within which moral values and rules of justice and fairness apply. Mummendey and Wenzel (1999) stress, for instance, that lack of inclusion is accompanied by a devaluation of outgroups and minorities that leads to a loss of normative restriction against treating outgroups negatively and cruelly. When outgroups are not categorized as prototypical components of an inclusive category, they are also excluded from the moral community of reference and can be treated harmfully (Opatow, 1990). On the contrary, moral inclusion captures the dynamics of peace-building in its emphasis on equality, justice and concern for universal wellbeing (Opatow, Gerson, & Woodside, 2005). The concept of moral inclusion is therefore closely connected to the inclusiveness of the community of reference. A restricted definition of the community would reflect attitudes of exclusion, whereas a broad concept of community is more likely to match with broad moral inclusion (Morselli & Passini, *in press*; Passini, 2010; Passini & Morselli, 2009). Thus, protest is defined as a function of inclusion: the degree to which group members include or exclude others social groups from their claims of justice vis-à-vis an authority defines how much prosocial or antisocial their protest actually is. According to this line of reasoning, inclusion is considered as

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10303340>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10303340>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)