The central consumer is an important player in the marketing realm. With a relatively large number of social ties, he exerts disproportionate influence on other consumers, increasing total product market sales and rate of product diffusion. Naturally, marketers search ways to influence the central and sway him into adopting their products and ideas. The current research seeks to understand whether, and when, the central can be influenced by his peer group.

While some studies portray the central as resistant to social influence (Hu and Van den Bulte, 2014), other studies suggest the opposite (Lee, Cotte, & Noseworthy 2010). We propose that the effect of centrality on susceptibility to influence depends on whether the central relies on his peers to maintain his position. When the central is interdependent, he exhibits greater group conformity than the marginal. However, the effect disappears when the central feels independent.

Studies 1 and 2 examine the central's susceptibility to group influence in a relational context, where the primary goal of the group is to provide social activity and support. In these groups the central relies on others to maintain his position. Using students' groups and a fictitious neighbors' group we find that the central is more is more attracted to the group, and is more likely to agree with the group than the marginal. In study 3 we measure individual differences in interdependence using the Singelis (1994) scale of self-construal. We find that among interdependent participants centrality leads to group conformity; among independent participants the effect is diminished.

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