Social Influence

Chapter 7
Social Influence

• the exercise of social power by a person or group,
• to change the attitudes or behavior of others in a particular direction
Social Influence

• Conformity
  – change one’s beliefs or behaviors to match others; yield to perceived group pressure

• Compliance
  – publicly performing an act at another’s request (even if we prefer not to)

• Obedience to Authority
  – compliance with a legitimate authority; perform an action to a direct order/request
Social Power

• the force available to the influencer to motivate attitude or behavior change

• can originate from:
  – having access to certain resources (rewards, punishments, information)
  – social position in society
Social Power

Six bases of social power:

- **Rewards**: providing + outcomes
- **Coercion**: providing - outcomes
- **Expertise**: special knowledge
- **Information**: message content
- **Referent power**: identifying w/ others
- **Legitimate authority**: right to make requests
  - power of helplessness: due to the norm of “social responsibility”
CONFORMITY

change one’s beliefs or behaviors to match others; yield to perceived group pressure
Conformity

1. The Sherif Studies: Ambiguous Reality
   “a visual perception experiment”
   autokinetic effect: estimate of movement
   individual first, then groups of 2-3
   emergence of social norms (and adherence afterwards)
   using ‘their’ standards in ‘their’ absence
Conformity

• **social norm:**
  – an expected standard of behavior and belief,
  – established and enforced by a group
Asch Line Judgment Study:
Which line on the right resembles the one on the left?
2. The Asch Studies: Unanimous Majority

- ambiguity or not?
Conformity

• wrong answer 37% of the time
• 76% conformed to incorrect answer at least once
CONFORMITY

When people are free to do as they please, they usually imitate each other.
Conformity: Why?

- Informational influence:
  - desire to be right,
  - the need to reduce uncertainty
  - following others for useful information
Conformity: Why?

- Normative influence:
  - desire to be liked,
  - need to be approved
  - following others for gaining acceptance

- Public vs. Private
Conformity: When?

- **Group Size**
  - up to a certain point (3-4 confederates)
- **Group Cohesiveness & Topic Relevance**
  - members attracted to each other
- **Commitment to group**
  - all + and - forces that act to keep a person in a group
Conformity: When?

• Social support / Group unanimity
  – just one person that disagrees with you is enough!
• Desire for individuation
• Desire for personal control
  – theory of personal reactance
  – independence vs. anticonformity
Conformity: When?

• Self-awareness
  – private: reduces conformity
  – public: increases conformity
Conformity

• Cultural context is also important:
• Individualistic cultures emphasize freedom and independence
  – Conformity = loss of control
• Collectivistic cultures emphasize ties to social group
  – Conformity = maturity and inner strength
• Need for approval vs. need for autonomy
Conformity

• Minority influence: dissenters produce change within a group
• conforming to majority:
  – truth in numbers (informational)
  – concern for being accepted (normative)
• minority opinions viewed more negatively
• hence, subject to more critical analysis
Conformity

• majority versus minority influence: dual process theories
• need to be consistent and confident
• Moscovici, 1985: blue or green?
Conformity

The bar chart shows the percent of "green" responses in different conditions:

- Control: 0
- Inconsistent Minority: 1
- Consistent Minority: 9

The chart indicates a significantly higher percent of "green" responses in the Consistent Minority condition compared to the other two.
Conformity

- overt responses as well as private beliefs
- need to be flexible and open-minded
- single vs. double minorities
- usually named ‘innovation’
- better if in line with emerging norms
publicly performing an act at another’s request (even if we prefer not to)

COMPLIANCE
Compliance: 3 factors

1. More likely to comply if in a positive mood
   - more active, more likely to grant requests
   - pleasant thoughts and memories; feel + towards requesters
   - less likely to critically analyze events
Compliance: 3 factors

• 2. Reciprocity: the expectation that you need to return a favor
  – commonly used for sales (e.g., free samples)
  – feel obliged to comply with request

• 3. Giving reasons:
  – habit to explain others’ behavior
  – believe it’s worthy of exception
Compliance

• Mindless compliance:
  – a placebo reason almost as effective as a real one in gaining compliance
  – “Can I use the copier because I have to make copies?”
  – “...because I’m in a rush”
Compliance Techniques

• Foot-in-the-door: First small, then a large request
  – e.g., sign a petition, then money

• Door-in-the-face: First an unreasonably large request, then a smaller one
  – e.g., weekend trip w/ friends, then party
Compliance Techniques

• Low-ball: First make a reasonable request; then reveal further costs
  – e.g., get “OK”, then give the time
• That’s-not-all: First make a large request, then offer a bonus or discount
  – e.g., buy one, get one free
• Pique: Make an unusual request to disrupt target’s mindless refusal script
Compliance

• Reactance theory:
  – Maintain freedom of action
  – Influence attempts that threaten perceived freedom may backfire
  – e.g., strongly versus moderately worded anti-drinking message
Obedience

• based on the belief: “authorities have the right to make requests”

• Crimes of obedience:
  – when demands of authorities immoral or illegal
  – e.g., Eichmann defense
Obedience

• The Milgram experiments (1963):
• Study on learning pairs of words
• Participants assigned as “teachers” to administer electric shock to “learners”
• Administer shocks when incorrect
• Shock levels increment from 15 to 450 v
OBEDIENCE

compliance with a legitimate authority; perform an action to a direct order/request
Obedience

• Learner begs the teacher to stop
• Experimenter orders participant to continue regardless
• When do people disobey authority?
# Obedience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shock Level (mv)</th>
<th>% obeying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-240 (slight to very strong)</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>255-300 (intense)</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>315-360 (extreme intensity)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>375-420 (Danger: severe shock)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>435-450 (“XXX”)</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Obedience

• IMPORTANCE:
• “normality” or “banality” of evil and the power of the social situation