

What are the advantages/disadvantages of conforming?

☞ Tells you how to properly behave in social situation

EX: when to applaud, stand up, kneel

☞ It provides a justification for your behavior

EX: everybody is doing it – false consensus

☞ Sometimes result in Cognitive Dissonance = compliance

EX: participants in Asch's experiment

Conformity – a change in behavior or belief as a result of real or imagined group pressure

Compliance – conformity that involves publicly acting in accord with social pressure while privately disagreeing

Obedience – compliance to an explicit command

Acceptance – conformity that involves both acting and believing in accord with social pressure

Sherif's Studies of Norm Formation

Autokinetic phenomenon – the apparent movement of a stationary point of light in the dark.

☞ Participant became “unwitting conspirators in perpetuating cultural fraud”

☞ Illustrates how societal beliefs could simply be a result of mass believing

☞ Formation of fads

EX: Hair style, fashion, what's “in” and what's not

Asch's studies of Group Pressure – matching of the lines

What do you think about the results of the experiment?

☞ We are also victims of this in normal everyday life

EX: applauding and standing during Bush's State of the Union address, stopping during a flag ceremony!!!

Milgram's Obedience Experiment

What were your thoughts while you were reading about the experiment?

How far would you have gone? – more than 60% reached the XXX threshold!

Explanations for high amount of obedience:

1. experiment took place in a reputable institution
2. the experiment is perceived to be for some worthy purpose – science

3. the victim is perceived to have voluntarily agreed to participate in the experiment
4. the teacher is also a volunteer and perceives that he has the obligation aiding the experimenter
5. they had an equal chance of becoming the student; teacher might have well been the one being shocked
6. they are assured that the shocks are painful but not dangerous

Activity: Ask them to stand up and fall in line then clap their hands

☞ Illustrates how people could easily internalize the roles they play

What breeds obedience:

1. Emotional distance of the victim
 - ☞ Personalizing the victims (preventing nuclear war)
 - ☞ War is easier these days, you just bomb a whole village
2. Closeness and legitimacy of the authority
 - ☞ Physical closeness; slight touches

EX: a tap on the shoulder by managers and businessmen or salespeople

3. Institutional authority
 - ☞ Police, “influential” personalities
4. Liberating effects of group influence
 - ☞ This suggests that it only takes one voice to stir up a succession of voices

Further discussion of Authority

What are the attributes of authority figures?

- ☞ Linked to institutional authority
- ☞ Possess a perceived higher rank in society
- ☞ Uniform, titles, degrees

Why do we obey authority?

- ☞ Fear of repercussions
- ☞ Lack of knowledge – they are perceived as experts
- ☞ We internalize our roles as subordinates

Should we always obey authority?

EX: military

How does a person get authority?

- ☞ Through the roles assigned to them by society - institutional
- ☞ The respect they gain from society - personal

What would society be like without authority?

Applying Social Psychological Principles to the Experiments

1. Behavior and Attitudes

- ☞ SOCIAL PRESSURE caused by the group led the subjects in Asch's to DEFY their own BELIEFS; their behavior did NOT COINCIDE with what they thought was right!!!
- ☞ they could easily ATTRIBUTE their behavior to SITUATIONAL forces; when done on a NORMAL DAY, it would probably yield DIFFERENT RESULTS

EX: it is required by the experiment

Why didn't the participants comply when they were asked to jump to 330 volts?

- ☞ Entrapment caused by FOOT-IN-THE-DOOR

EX: participants did not continue when asked to jump right onto 330 volts

- ☞ Behavior feeds attitudes (COMPLIANCE BREEDS ACCEPTANCE) – they justified their behavior; they came to believe in what they are doing; INSUFFICIENT JUSTIFICATION

EX: “they deserved it; they were stupid”

2. The Power of the Situation

- ☞ Experiments show the power of the immediate situation to overpower our belief system

EX: probably what happens during homicide and manslaughter cases, why people sometimes commit crimes or do things that never crossed their mind.

- ☞ We feel the power social norms have when we break them (NORM VIOLATION ASSIGNMENT)

How many have said they would do something only to find themselves in the situation and not doing what they thought they would?

3. The Fundamental Attribution Error

- ☞ Follow-up studies reveal that people judge the “teachers” as being cruel despite being informed of the experimental conditions

What do these results suggest?

- ☞ Even good people can do bad things when overpowered by the situation

EX: Erap;

- ☞ People who do “evil” acts may not necessarily be innately evil

When Do People Conform

1. Size of Group

Social Impact Theory

- ☞ NUMBER: Several groups of a smaller number are better than one larger group;
2 – 3 people work better than 10 – 15
- ☞ IMMEDIACY: physical closeness
- ☞ STRENGTH: how important the influencing people are to you

2. Unanimity

- ☞ It takes only one person to break the silence and to WEAKEN a groups SOCIAL POWER

EX: Asch's experiment – had one of them answered differently, the subject would have felt more liberated and answered correctly; RED = ORANGE experiment

3. Cohesion

- ☞ People would listen more to people within their own group than to outsiders

4. Status

- ☞ Higher status people have a stronger impact; even people who ONLY APPEAR to be higher status; APPEARANCE MATTER!

5. Public Response

- ☞ We can respond more freely in private than in public – we conform more in public

EX: voting;

6. No Prior Commitment

- ☞ We usually stick to our public commitments

Why Conform

Normative Influence – conformity based on a person's desire to fulfill others' expectations, often TO GAIN ACCEPTANCE

- ☞ Concern for social image

Informational Influence – conformity that results from accepting evidence about reality provided by other people

- ☞ We look unto the behavior of others to see how we should behave
- ☞ Concern for being correct

Who Conforms

Gender

- ☞ Women conform more, or rather, MORE SOCIALLY SENSITIVE
- ☞ Interconnectedness

- ☞ Men are assigned higher status ranks – they are the authority

Personality

- ☞ People high in nAffiliation conform more
- ☞ Principle of aggregates
- ☞ Personality matters when the situation is controlled (constant); the situation matters when the personalities are controlled

Culture

- ☞ Collectivists conform more

Resisting Social Pressure

Reactance – a motive to protect or restore one's sense of freedom; Arises when someone threatens our freedom of action

- ☞ People do not like being coerced and may actually rebel against in retaliation
- ☞ Protect one's self, or sense of freedom

Asserting Uniqueness

- ☞ When asked, we tell of our distinctiveness
- ☞ We are more aware of our uniqueness, when we are the minority
- ☞ Self-fulfilling prophecy

***These experimental conditions only offer us insights into the processes we normally undergo in everyday life