

## **Conformity**

- tendency to change perceptions opinions, or behaviour in ways that are consistent with group norms
- Sherif's autokinetic effect study
- Ash's line judgement study (influence conformity)

## **Differences in conformity**

- individualistic vs collectivistic culture
  - cultural variation in adult's beliefs:
    - \* US vs Ni-Vanuatu adults
      - US adults judge high conformity children as less intelligent
      - Ni-Vanuatu adults judge high conformity children as high intelligent with better manners
  - Conformity pressure in adolescents

## **Sherif's autokinetic effect study – Norm formation**

- ps in dark room shown a single point of light
- Tasks: estimate distance that light moves
  - difficult and ambiguous task
  - light is stationary but appears to move
- do task first alone, then with other ps in the room
- Mimicry
  - very subtle, non-conscious form of conformity
  - taking on speech patterns and behavioural mannerisms of one's interaction partner
  - the more you mimic a person during a conversation, the more likely you like that person at the end of the conversation

- implications of mimicry
  - when other mimic us
    - \* we like them more
    - \* we feel the interaction goes more smoothly
    - \* we are more inclined to help them
  - 'Chameleon effect'

### **Asch's line judgment Study**

- 75% of ps conformed at least once
- 37% of trials were conforming
- When a confederate also gives a correct response, conformity drops
- when ps arrived late and had to make private judgement, conformity significantly dropped

### **Sexist comments from a group member**

- in prediction - 95% say something
- in fact - 44% say something

### **Social norms**

- rules or guidelines in a group or culture about what behaviors are proper and improper
- implicit or explicit
  - explicit (clearly stated): standing for national anthem/ wait our turn in lines
  - implicit (after observing others): leave a tip for waiters/ dress like everyone else/ wait our turn in lines

### **Why and when do people conform**

- to be right: informational influence
  - we believe others are correct in their judgments

- \* contestants on price is right
  - \* bystander intervention
- private conformity: changes in both overt behaviour and beliefs
- has long term effect
- To be liked: normative influence
  - we fear consequences of appearing deviant
    - \* dressing up
    - \* teenagers and popular crowd
  - public conformity: superficial change in overt behaviour only
  - does not have long term effect
- reasons for conformity
  - sherif study: informational influence
  - ash study: normative influence

## **When do people conform**

- look up
  - missing something important
- situational factors affecting conformity rates
  - group size: the larger group size is, the more likely people conform
  - unanimity(同意, 全体同意): if one confederate gives the correct answer, the more likely the ps give correct answer
  - cohesion(凝聚力): people who are wearing a uw t-shirt are cheating, we are more likely to cheat for the following tasks
  - status: higher status has better effect
  - public response: give public response, be more likely to conform
  - prior commitment: first to give correct answers, less likely to conform with 6 following wrong answers

## **Attitudes are contagious(感染力)**

- laugh tracks
- political debates

## **The Milgram experiment**

- Obedience - acting in accord with a direct order
- trying to understand Nazis
  - evil or normal people in abnormal circumstances
- would typical people obey authority to harm another
  - experts: < 1% of ps will do serious harm
- when there is only one confederate, 63% of people choose to shock to 450volts
- when there are two extra confederates, huge drops when there is confederate quits
- institutional influence
  - in the Yale, people tends to obey more, the other place drops to 48%
- ordinary people in charge
  - authority influence, when ordinary people in charge only 18% goes to 450 voltage
  - when two confederates quit, only 10% goes to 450 voltage
- physically close to teachers
  - drops to 40%
  - touch person's hand, drops to 30%
- only 1% people regards

## **Write pickle on the library book – eliciting unethical behaviour**

- predict: 11 people to get 3 to agree

- actual: 5 people to get 3 agree

### **Reflection on classic studies**

- behaviour and attitudes
  - external influences are strong
- the power of the situation
  - trying to break with social constraints shows us how powerful they are
- fundamental attribution error
  - milgram's participants were ordinary people

### **Reading Conformity**

- We choose labels to suit our values and judgments. Labels both describe and evaluate, and they are inescapable.
- Conformity is not just acting as other people act; it is also being affected by how they act.
- conformity is a change in behaviour or belief to accord with others.
- compliance: we conform to an expectation or request without really believing in what we are doing.
- obedience: If our compliance is to an explicit command
- acceptance(inward conformity):
  - We may join millions of others in exercising because we have all been told that exercise is healthy and we accept that as true.
  - Acceptance sometimes follows compliance
  - The shorter-lived memories that underlie public compliance have a different neural basis than the memories that underlie longer term private acceptance

### **Sherif's study – Norm formation**

- autokinetic phenomenon: optical illusion
- a year later: they still support the group norm
- Our views of reality are not ours alone.
- the results of suggestibility are sometimes amusing.
  - Comedy-show laugh tracks capitalize on our suggestibility.
- social contagion
  - people tend to mirror grammar that they read and hear
  - your mimicry would also incline the other person to like you and be helpful to you and to others
  - if the behaviour being mimicked is negative, such mimicry will foster disliking instead of liking

### **Asch's study of group pressure**

- 63 percent of the time people did not conform
- It is hard to stand up to a group of people you have just met, especially when you are trying to fit in with a new crowd.

### **Milgram's Obedience Studies**

- 63 percent fully complied with the experimenter's demands
- 84 percent said they were glad to have participated; only 1 percent regretted volunteering.

### **What breed obedience**

- Victim's distance
  - victim's emotional distance, the authority's closeness and legitimacy
  - whether or not the authority was part of a respected institution, and the liberating effects of a disobedient fellow participant.

- participants were much less obedient when the victim was visible
- it is easiest to abuse someone who is distant or depersonalized.
- On the positive side, people act most compassionately toward those who are personalized.
- Closeness and legitimacy of the authority
  - The physical presence of the experimenter also affected obedience.
  - Doctor (a legitimate authority) orders; nurse obeys
- Institutional authority
  - Milgram moved the study to Bridgeport, Connecticut.
  - Although the obedience rate (48 percent) was still remarkably high, it was significantly lower than the 65 percent rate at Yale.
- The liberating effects of group influence
  - During the study, both defied the experimenter, who then ordered the real subject to continue alone. Did he? No. Ninety percent liberated themselves by conforming to the defiant confederates.

## **Reflections on the Classic Studies**

- Behavior and attitude
  - Torn between the pleas of the victim and the orders of the experimenter, between the desire to avoid doing harm and the desire to be a good participant, a surprising number chose to obey.
  - criticism produces contempt, which licenses cruelty, which, when justified, leads to brutality, then killing, then systematic killing.
  - Evolving attitudes both follow and justify actions.
  - Initial helping heightened commitment, leading to more helping.
- The power of the situation
  - immediate situational forces are powerful

- the power of normative pressures and showed how hard it is to predict behaviour, even our own
- saying what we would do in a hypothetical situation is often easier than doing it in a real situation.
- ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process
- Conformity situations in the laboratory differ from those in everyday life.

## **What Predicts Conformity**

- The more insecure we are about our judgments, the more influence we are by others.
- Conformity is highest when the group has three or more people and is cohesive, unanimous, and high in status
- Conformity is also highest when the response is public and made without prior commitment.
- Group size
  - three to five people will elicit much more conformity than just one or two.
  - Similarly, two groups of three people elicited more conformity than one group of six, and three groups of two people elicited even more.
- unanimity:
  - When someone giving correct answers punctures the group' s unanimity, individuals conform only one-fourth as often.
- cohesion:
  - The more cohesiveness a group exhibits, the more power it gains over its members.
  - group members who feel attracted to the group are more responsive to its influence
  - Fearing rejection by group members whom they like, they allow them a certain power.



- when university students compare themselves with drinkers who are dissimilar from themselves, they become less likely to drink
- after observing cheating by someone wearing a T-shirt from their own university, participants in another experiment became more likely to cheat. But if the cheater wore a T-shirt from a competing university, it had the opposite effect
- Status:
  - higher-status people tend to have more impact
  - Among both humans and other primates, prestige begets influence
  - people of lower status accepted the experimenter's commands more readily than people of higher status
- public response:
  - people conform more when they must respond in front of others rather than when they write their answer privately
- No Prior Commitment
  - Prior commitments restrain persuasion
  - Making a public commitment makes people hesitant to back down.
  - behaviour then changes more than when environmental appeals are heard without inviting a commitment

## **Why conform?**

- two possibilities:
  - normative influence: our desire to be liked
    - \* Normative influence is “going along with the crowd” to avoid rejection, to stay in people's good graces, or to gain their approval
  - informational influence: our desire to be right
    - \* Informational influence leads people to privately accept others' influence.
    - \* when people conform, their perceptions may be genuinely influenced.

\* normative influence can cause informational influence as people construct reasons to justify their conformity

- conformity is greater when participants feel incompetent, when the task is difficult, and when the subjects care about being right (informational influence)
- Conformity is greater when people respond before a group (normative influence)

### **who conform**

- Personality also predicts behaviour better when social influences are weak
- Compared with people in individualistic countries, those in collectivist countries (where social harmony is prized) are more responsive to others' influence.
- Conformity may reflect an evolutionary response to survival threats, such as disease-bearing pathogens
- Cultural norms promoting greater conformity may have emerged in these areas to protect people from these dangerous diseases
- working-class people tend to prefer similarity to others while middle-class people more strongly preferred to see themselves as unique individuals.
- when Milgram specifically explored this in the paradigm above, he found no difference between men and women
- women were more likely to conform when they were in situations where people could observe the participant's behaviours, such as the group pressure situations in the Asch study.
- Eagly argues this is because men tend to choose more male-oriented topics, where women are less knowledgeable, thus leading to increased "informational" conformity.
- males were found to conform more to female-oriented topics, where women displayed superior skills and/or knowledge
- Social roles allow some freedom of interpretation to those who act them out, but some aspects of any role must be performed

## To be differences

- reactance: Individuals value their sense of freedom and self-efficacy, people act to protect their sense of freedom
- people feel better when they see themselves as moderately unique
- Seeing oneself as unique also appears in people's "spontaneous self-concepts."
  - introduce oneself
- we become more keenly aware of our gender when we are with people of the other gender
- The majority group, being less conscious of race, may see the minority group as hypersensitive.