

Social Influence

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Social influence occurs when an individual's thoughts, feelings or actions are affected by other people. Social influence takes many forms and can be seen in conformity, socialization, peer pressure, obedience, leadership, persuasion, sales, and marketing. In 1958, Harvard psychologist, Herbert Kelman identified three broad varieties of social influence.

Compliance is when people appear to agree with others, but actually keep their dissenting opinions private.

Identification is when people are influenced by someone who is liked and respected, such as a famous celebrity.

Internalization is when people accept a belief or behavior and agree both publicly and privately.

Morton Deutsch and Harold Gerard described two psychological needs that lead humans to conform to the expectations of others. These include our need to be right (informational social influence), and our need to be liked (normative social influence). Informational influence (or social proof) is an influence to accept information from another as evidence about reality. Informational influence comes into play when people are uncertain, either because stimuli are intrinsically ambiguous or because there is social disagreement. Normative influence is an influence to conform to the positive expectations of others. In terms of Kelman's typology, normative influence leads to public compliance, whereas informational influence leads to private acceptance.

Types

Social Influence is a broad term that relates to many different phenomena. Below are some major types of social influence that are being researched in the field of social psychology. For more information, follow the main article links provided.

Kelman's varieties

There are three processes of attitude change as defined by Harvard psychologist Herbert Kelman in his 1958 paper in the Journal of Conflict Resolution. The purpose of defining these processes was to help determine the effects of social influence: for example, to separate public conformity (behavior) from private acceptance (personal belief).

Compliance

Compliance is the act of responding favorably to an explicit or implicit request offered by others. Technically, compliance is a change in behavior but not necessarily attitude- one can comply due to mere obedience, or by otherwise opting to withhold one's private thoughts due to social pressures. According to Kelman's 1958 paper, the satisfaction derived from compliance is due to the social effect of the accepting influence (i.e. people comply for an expected reward or

punishment-aversion).

Identification

Identification is the changing of attitudes or behaviors due to the influence of someone that is liked. Advertisements that rely upon celebrities to market their products are taking advantage of this phenomenon. The desired relationship that the identifier relates with the behavior or attitude change is the "reward", according to Kelman.

Internalization

Internalization is the process of acceptance of a set of norms established by people or groups which are influential to the individual. The individual accepts the influence because the content of the influence accepted is intrinsically rewarding. It is congruent with the individual's value system, and according to Kelman the "reward" of internalization is "the content of the new behavior".

Conformity

Conformity is a type of social influence involving a change in belief or behavior in order to fit in with a group. It is the most common and pervasive form of social influence. Social Psychology research in conformity tends to distinguish between two varieties: informational conformity (also called social proof, or "internalization" in Kelman's terms) and normative conformity ("compliance" in Kelman's terms). There are naturally more than two or three variables in society influential on human psychology and conformity; the notion of "varieties" of conformity based upon "social influence" is ambiguous and undefinable in this context.

In the case of peer pressure, a person is convinced to do something (such as illegal drugs) which they might not want to do, but which they perceive as "necessary" to keep a positive relationship with other people, such as their friends. Conformity from peer pressure generally results from identification within the group members, or from compliance of some members to appease others.

Minority influence

Minority influence takes place when a majority is influenced to accept the beliefs or behaviors of a minority. Minority influence can be affected by the sizes of majority and minority groups, the level of consistency of the minority group and situational factors (such as the affluence or social importance of the minority). Minority influence most often operates through informational social influence (as opposed to normative social influence) because the majority may be indifferent to the liking of the minority.

Self-fulfilling prophecy

A self-fulfilling prophecy is a prediction that directly or indirectly causes itself to become true, due to a positive feedback between belief and behavior. A prophecy declared as truth (when it is actually false) may sufficiently influence people, either through fear or logical confusion, so that their reactions ultimately fulfill the once-false prophecy. The term is credited to sociologist Robert K. Merton and is defined in his book *Social Theory and Social Structure*.

Reactance

Reactance is the adoption of a view contrary to the view that they are being pressured to accept, perhaps due to the perceived threat to behavioral freedoms. This behavior has also been called anticonformity. While the results are the opposite of what the influencer intended, this reactive behavior is the result of social pressure. It is notable that anticonformity does not necessarily mean independence. In many studies, reactance manifests itself in a deliberate rejection of an influence, even when the influence is clearly correct.

Obedience

Obedience is a form of social influence that derives from an authority figure. The Milgram Experiment, Zimbardo's Stanford prison experiment, and the Hofling hospital experiment are three particularly well-known experiments on obedience, and they all conclude that humans behave surprisingly obedient in the presence of perceived legitimate authority figures.

Persuasion

Persuasion is the process of guiding oneself or another toward the adoption of some attitude by some rational or symbolic means. Robert Cialdini defined six "weapons of influence": reciprocity, commitment, social proof, authority, liking, and scarcity. These "weapons of influence" attempt to bring about conformity by directed means. Persuasion can occur through appeals to reason or appeals to emotion.

Antecedents

Many factors can affect the strength of social influence.

Social impact theory

Social Impact Theory was developed by Bob Latané in 1981. It states that there are three factors

which will increase people's likelihood to respond to social influence:

Strength: The importance of the influencing group to the individual.

Immediacy: Physical (and temporal) proximity of the influencing group to the individual at the time of the influence attempt.

Number: The number of people in the group.

Cialdini's Weapons of Influence"

In his work, Robert Cialdini defines six "Weapons of Influence" that can contribute to an individual's propensity to be influenced by a persuader:

Reciprocity: People tend to return a favor.

Commitment and Consistency: People do not like to be self-contradictory. Once they commit to an idea or behavior, they are averse to changing their minds without good reason.

Social Proof: People will be more open to things they see others doing.

Authority: People will tend to obey authority figures.

Liking: People are more easily swayed by people they like.

Scarcity: A perceived limitation of resources will generate demand.

Unanimity

Social Influence is strongest when the group perpetrating it is consistent and committed. Even a single instance of dissent can greatly wane the strength of an influence. For example, in Milgram's first set of obedience experiments, 65% of participants complied with fake authority figures to administer "maximum shocks" to a confederate. In iterations of the Milgram experiment where three people administered shocks (two of whom were confederates), once one confederate disobeyed, only 10% of subjects administered the maximum shocks.

Status

Those perceived as experts may exert social influence as a result of their perceived expertise. This involves credibility, a tool of social influence from which one draws upon the notion of trust. People believe an individual to be credible for a variety of reasons, such as perceived experience, attractiveness, knowledge, etc. Additionally, pressure to maintain one's reputation and not be viewed as fringe may increase the tendency to agree with the group, known as groupthink. Appeals to authority may also especially affect norms of obedience. The compliance of normal humans to authority in the famous Milgram experiment demonstrate the power of perceived authority.

Those with access to the media may use this access in an attempt to influence the public. For

example, a politician may use speeches to persuade the public to support issues that he or she does not have the power to impose on the public. This is often referred to as using the "bully pulpit". Likewise, celebrities don't usually possess any political power but are familiar to many of the world's citizens, and therefore possess social status.

Culture

Culture appears to play a role in willingness to conform to a group. Stanley Milgram found that conformity was higher in Norway than in France. This has been attributed to Norway's longstanding tradition of social responsibility, as compared to France's cultural focus on individualism. Japan likewise has a collectivist culture and thus a higher propensity to conform; however, in a 1970 Asch-style study, it was found that, when alienated, Japanese students would be susceptible to anticonformity (giving answers that were incorrect even when the group had coincided on correct answers) one third of the time- significantly higher than has been seen in replications of Asch studies before.

While gender does not significantly affect likelihood to conform, gender roles will in the right conditions. For example, studies from the 1950s and 1960s concluded that women were more likely to conform than men. However, in a 1971 study it was found that there was experimenter bias involved (all of the researchers were male). Studies thereafter found that likelihood to conform was close to equal and that, furthermore, men would conform more often on feminine topics, as women would conform more often on masculine topics- ignorance on a subject can lead to deferral to "social proof".

Emotions

Emotion and disposition may affect likelihood of conformity or anticonformity. In 2009, a study concluded that fear increases the chance of agreeing with the group, while romance or lust increases the chance of going against the group.

Social structure

Social networks

A social network is a social structure made up of nodes (representing individuals or organizations) which are connected (through ties, also called edges, connections, or links) by one or more types of interdependency (such as friendship, common interests or beliefs, sexual relations, or kinship). Social network analysis uses the lens of network theory to view social relationships. Social network analysis as a field has become more prominent since the mid-20th century in determining the channels and effects of social influence. For example, Christakis and Fowler found that social

networks transmit states and behaviors such as obesity, smoking, drinking and happiness.

"The Tipping Point"

In his book, *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell discusses the way new ideas are transmitted by social influence. New products or fashions are introduced by innovators, who tend to be creative and nonconforming. Then early adopters join in, followed by the early majority. By this time, a substantial number of people are using the idea or product, and normative and informational influence encourages others to conform as well. The early majority is followed by a second group that Gladwell calls the late majority, and then finally by the laggards, who tend to be highly conventional and resistant to change.

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