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## What are the factors of conformity

Groups influence individual decision-making processes in a variety of ways, such as groupthink, groupshift, and deindividuation. Give examples of groupthink, groupshift, and deindividuation Key Takeaways Key Points Research has identified a few common requirements that contribute to recognition of a group: interdependence, social interaction, perception as a group, commonality of purpose, and favoritism. There are both positive and negative implications of group influence on individual behavior. This influence is useful in the context of work and team settings; however, it was also evident in Nazi Germany. Groupthink is a psychological phenomenon that occurs within a group of people, in which the desire for harmony or conformity in the group results in an incorrect or deviant decision-making outcome. Groupshift is the phenomenon in which the initial positions of individual members of a group are exaggerated toward a more extreme position. Deindividuation is a concept in social psychology that is generally thought of as the losing of self-awareness in groups. Theories of deindividuation propose that it is a psychological state of decreased self-evaluation and decreased evaluation apprehension that causes abnormal collective behavior. Key Terms deindividuation: Individuals' loss of self-awareness when in a group. groupthink: A psychological phenomenon that occurs within groups of people, in which the desire for harmony in a decision-making group overrides a realistic appraisal of alternatives. "Group behavior" refers to the ways people behave in large- or small-group situations. People join groups for a multitude of reasons, most frequently because membership satisfies a need of the individual. Group membership can provide companionship, survival and security, affiliation status, power and control, and achievement. There is currently no universal description of what constitutes a group, though research has identified a few common requirements that contribute to recognition of a group: Interdependence—Individual members must depend, to some degree, on the output of the collective members. Social interaction—Accomplishing a goal requires some form of verbal or nonverbal communication among members. Perception of a group—All members of the collective must agree they are part of the group. Commonality of purpose—All members of the collective come together to attain a common goal. Favoritism—Members of the same group tend to be positively prejudiced toward other members and discriminate in their favor. How Groups Influence Individual Behavior Individual behavior and decision making can be influenced by the presence of others. There are both positive and negative implications of group influence on individual behavior. For example, group influence can often be useful in the context of work settings, team sports, and political activism. However, the influence of groups on the individual can also generate negative behaviors. While there are many ways a group can influence behavior, we will focus on three key phenomena: groupthink, groupshift, and deindividuation. Groupthink happens when group members, faced with an important choice, become so focused on making a smooth, quick decision that they overlook other, possibly more fruitful options. Groupshift is a phenomenon in which the initial positions of individual members of a group are exaggerated toward a more extreme position. Deindividuation happens when a person lets go of self-consciousness and control and does what the group is doing, usually with negative goals or outcomes. We will discuss these more in detail below. Groupthink Groupthink is a psychological phenomenon that occurs within a group of people, in which the desire for harmony or conformity in the group results in an incorrect or deviant decision-making outcome. It has been further defined as a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive group, when the members' strivings for unanimity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action. Group members try to minimize conflict and reach a consensus decision without critical evaluation of alternative ideas or viewpoints. Several conditions must take place for groupthink to occur: the group must be isolated from outside influences; loyalty must prevent individuals from raising controversial issues of alternative solutions; there must be a loss of individual creativity and independent thinking; and the group must experience the "illusion of invulnerability," an inflated certainty that the right decision has been made. Typically the group is under a high level of pressure to make a decision, and it lacks an impartial leader. These factors can lead a group to make a catastrophically bad decision. Nazi Germany is often cited as a prime example of the negative potential of groupthink because a number of factors, such as shared illusions and rationalizations and a lack of individual accountability, allowed for a few powerful leaders to enlist many otherwise "normal" people in committing mass acts of violence. While groupthink is generally accepted as a negative phenomenon, it has been proposed that groups with a strong ability to work together are able to solve problems more efficiently than individuals or less cohesive groups. Groupthink: This image outlines the requirements, symptoms, and defects of groupthink in detail. Groups must be cohesive, insulated, lack an impartial leader, and homogenous, as well as be in a provocative, high stress situation, in order for groupthink to occur. Groupshift Groupshift is the phenomenon in which the initial positions of individual members of a group are exaggerated toward a more extreme position. When people are in groups, they assess risk differently than they do when they are alone. In the group, they are likely to make riskier decisions as the shared risk makes the individual risk seem to be less. What appears to happen in groups is that discussion leads to a significant shift in the position of the members to a more extreme position in the direction they were all already leaning. A group of moderate liberals may shift from moderate to strongly liberal views when in a group together. A group of mildly racist people may become viciously racist when together. The theory behind this shift is that the group dynamic allows the individual members to feel that their position is correct or supported, and they will feel more comfortable taking on more extreme views, as other members of the group support their initial ideas. The extreme ideas seem less risky as it appears the view is held by numerous like-minded people. Deindividuation Deindividuation is exactly what the word implies: a loss of one's individuality. Instead of acting as individuals, people experiencing deindividuation become lost in a group. This often means that they will go along with whatever the group is doing, whether it be rioting, looting, lynching, or engaging in cyberbullying. Some people posit that this happens because individuals experience a sense of anonymity in a group. The larger the group, the higher the incidence of deindividuation, which is characterized by an individual relinquishing self-consciousness and control and doing what the group is doing. This occurs when people are moved by the group experience to do things that, without the group for support, they would not normally do. It is important to distinguish deindividuation from obedience (when a person yields to explicit instructions or orders from an authority figure), compliance (when a person responds favorably to a request from others) and conformity (when a person attempts to match his attitudes to group norms, versus the total relinquishing of individuality seen in deindividuation). Obedience is a form of social influence that occurs when a person yields to explicit instructions or orders from an authority figure. Explain how the Milgram and Stanford Prison experiments informed our understanding of human obedience Key Takeaways Key Points Obedience is generally distinguished from compliance (behavior influenced by peers) and conformity (behavior intended to match that of the majority). In Milgram's experiments on obedience, 65% of participants administered a 450-volt shock to an unresponsive confederate, out of obedience to the experimenter, even though most of the participants felt hesitant to do so. In the Stanford prison experiment, participants were selected to take on randomly assigned roles of prisoner or guard in a mock prison, and they adapted to their roles beyond the experimenter's expectations. Higher levels of perceived prestige and closer proximity to the authority figure are associated with increased obedience. Deindividuation and lack of expertise in the participants were also associated with higher levels of obedience. Key Terms obedience: A form of social influence in which a person yields to explicit instructions or orders from an authority figure. confederate: Someone who is part of an experiment, but who pretends to be a participant in the study. authority: The person or source of power that enables the enforcement of rules and/or gives orders. deindividuation: A concept in social psychology that is generally thought of as the losing of self-awareness in groups. Obedience, in human behavior, is a form of social influence. It occurs when a person yields to explicit instructions or orders from an authority figure. Obedience is generally distinguished from compliance (behavior influenced by peers) and conformity (behavior intended to match that of the majority). Following the Second World War—and in particular the Holocaust—psychologists set out to investigate the phenomenon of human obedience. Early attempts to explain the Holocaust had focused on the idea that there was something distinctive about German culture that had allowed the Holocaust to take place. They quickly found that the majority of humans are surprisingly obedient to authority. The Holocaust resulted in the extermination of millions of Jews, Gypsies, and communists; it has prompted us to take a closer look at the roots of obedience—in part, so that tragedies such as this may never happen again. Research on Obedience Milgram The Milgram experiment on obedience to authority figures (1963) was a series of social psychology experiments conducted by Yale University psychologist Stanley Milgram. These experiments measured the willingness of study participants to obey an authority figure who instructed them to perform acts that conflicted with their personal conscience. The experiments involved a "teacher" who conducted the experiment, a participant, and a confederate who pretended to be a volunteer. A confederate is someone who is a part of the experiment, but who pretends to be a participant in the study. The participant believed his role was randomly assigned. Milgram experiment setup: Illustration of the setup of a Milgram experiment. The experimenter (E) convinces the subject (T) to give what he believes are painful electric shocks to another subject, who is actually an actor (L). Many subjects continued to give shocks despite pleas of mercy from the actors. The participants were instructed that they had to shock a person in another room for every wrong answer on a learning task, and the shocks increased with intensity for each wrong answer. If participants questioned the procedure, the researcher would encourage them further. The person receiving the "shock" would make noises of pain, complain of heart pains, and even demonstrate seizure-like behavior. At this point, many participants indicated their desire to stop the experiment and check on the confederate; however, most of them continued after being assured they would not be held responsible. If at any time the participant indicated his desire to halt the experiment, he was verbally encouraged to continue. If the participant still wished to stop after all the verbal prods, the experiment ended. Otherwise, it was only halted after the participant had given the maximum 450-volt shock three times in a row. Milgram's senior-level psychology students hypothesized that only a very small fraction of participants (1%) would inflict maximum voltage. In Milgram's first set of experiments, 65% of participants administered the full 450-volt shock, even though most were very uncomfortable doing so. Most participants paused and questioned the experiment at some point, but 26 out of 40 still administered the full shock, even after the confederate ceased to respond. These results demonstrate that participants were willing to obey an authority figure and administer extremely harmful (and potentially lethal) shocks. Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment The Stanford prison experiment was a study, conducted by Philip Zimbardo at Stanford University in 1971, of the psychological effects of becoming a prisoner or prison guard and. Twenty-four males students were selected to take on randomly assigned roles of prisoner or guard in a mock prison situated in the basement of the Stanford psychology building. The participants adapted to their roles beyond the experimenter's expectations. The guards enforced authoritarian measures and ultimately subjected some of the prisoners to psychological and physical torture. Many of the prisoners passively accepted abuse and, at the request of the guards, readily harassed other prisoners who attempted to prevent it. The experiment even affected Zimbardo himself, who, in his role as the superintendent, permitted the abuse to continue. A fraction of the way through the experiment, Zimbardo announced an end to the study. It has been argued that the results of the study demonstrate the impressionability and obedience of people when provided with a legitimizing ideology, along with social and institutional support. The results indicate that environmental factors have a significant affect on behavior. In addition to environmental factors, Zimbardo attributes many of the guards' actions to deindividuation afforded by the authority position and even the anonymity of the uniforms. The Abu Ghraib prison scandal has been interpreted based on the results of this study, suggesting that deindividuation may also have impacted the guards' behavior in that situation. Factors Influencing Obedience After running these experiments, Milgram and Zimbardo concluded that the following factors affect obedience: Proximity to the authority figure: Proximity indicates physical closeness; the closer the authority figure is, the more obedience is demonstrated. In the Milgram experiment, the experimenter was in the same room as the participant, likely eliciting a more obedient response. Prestige of the experimenter: Something as simple as wearing a lab coat or not wearing a lab coat can affect levels of obedience; authority figures with more prestige elicit more obedience; both researchers have suggested that the prestige associated with Yale and Stanford respectively may have influenced obedience in their experiments. Expertise: A subject who has neither the ability nor the expertise to make decisions, especially in a crisis, will leave decision making to the group and its hierarchy. Deindividuation: The essence of obedience consists in the fact that people come to view themselves not as individuals but as instruments for carrying out others' wishes, and thus no longer see themselves as responsible for their actions. Controversy and Obedience Experiments The Milgram and Zimbardo experiments stand as dramatic demonstrations of the power of authority and other situational factors in human behavior. While we have learned and continued to learn from their results, they have been endlessly controversial. There is always controversy over exactly how to interpret social psychology experiments. Human behavior is extremely complex, and so there are always numerous variables to consider when interpreting such studies. But the ethical considerations raised by these studies are even more controversial. Specifically, the subjects were exposed to significant short-term stress, as well as potential long-term trauma. Additionally, neither Milgram nor Zimbardo informed subjects ahead of time of the nature of their participation. While a follow-up of Milgram's participants indicated that they did not experience any long-term distress, Zimbardo's prison participants did. Largely as a result of these experiments, ethical standards have been modified to protect participants. "Compliance" refers to a response, specifically a submission, made in reaction to an implicit or explicit request. Explain how certain strategies and group attributes may influence compliance Key Takeaways Key Points Social psychologists view compliance as a means of social influence used to reach goals or attain social or personal gains. Group strength, group size, immediacy, and similarity are all factors that can influence compliance in an individual. There are a number of techniques used to gain compliance, including the foot-in-the-door technique, the door-in-the-face technique, low-balling, ingratiation, and the norm of reciprocity. Key Terms persuasion: The act of influencing one's opinions or beliefs. compliance: The tendency of conforming with or agreeing to the wishes of others. In social psychology, "compliance" refers to an individual's acquiescence in response to a request from a peer. It is generally distinguished from obedience (behavior influenced by authority figures) and conformity (behavior intended to match that of a social majority). Compliance is considered a social phenomenon, meaning that the words, actions, or mere presence of other people often plays a role in someone's decision whether or not to comply with a given request. The request may be explicit (directly stated) or implicit (subtly implied); the target may or may not recognize that he or she is being urged to act in a particular way. Compliance affects everyday behavior, especially in social interactions. Social psychologists view compliance as a means of social influence used to reach goals or attain social or personal gains. In studying compliance, social psychologists aim to examine overt and subtle social influences and their relationship to compliance. Individuals can be coaxed into compliance in a number of ways, which we will discuss next. Factors Influencing Compliance Factors that influence compliance include the following: Group strength: The more important the group is to an individual, the more likely the individual is to comply with social influence. For instance, an individual is more likely to comply with the requests of her sorority than her biology classmates. Immediacy: The proximity of the group makes an individual more likely to comply with group pressures. Pressure to comply is strongest when the group is closer to the individual and made of up people the individual cares about. For example, compliance with parents' wishes is more likely if they live in the same city than it is if they live in another state or country. Number: Compliance increases as the number of people in a group increases. Importantly, the influence of adding people starts to decrease as the group gets larger. For example, adding one person to a large group (from 60 to 61) is less influential than adding one person to a small group (from three to four). Similarity: Perceived shared characteristics cause an individual to be more likely to comply with a request, particularly when the shared feature is perceived as unplanned and rare (such as a shared birthday). Techniques to Achieve Compliance In addition to these factors, the following techniques have been proven to effectively induce compliance from another party. Foot-in-the-Door Technique In using the foot-in-the-door technique, the subject is asked to perform a small request, and after agreeing, a larger request is made. Because the subject complied with the initial request or requests, he or she is more likely to feel obligated to fulfill additional favors. For example, Timmy asks his mom for permission to go over to John's house for an hour. She says yes, and later he asks if he can stay the night. Door-in-the-Face Technique This technique begins with an initial large request that the subject is not expected to comply with. The large request is then followed by a second, more reasonable, request. For instance, Jane asks her parents to pay for her vacation to Australia. They flat-out refuse, because it is extremely expensive. She then says, "Well, if you won't pay for me to go to Australia, will you at least pay for me to go to New York?" Her parents are more likely to comply with the more reasonable request, after having rejected the initial, extreme request. The same request made in isolation, however (just asking for a trip to New York), would not have been as effective. Low-Ball Technique This technique is frequently employed by car salesmen. Low-balling gains compliance by offering the subject something at a low initial cost. The cost may be monetary, time related, or anything else that requires something from the individual. After the subject agrees to the initial cost, the requester increases the cost at the last moment. The subject is more likely to comply with this change in cost since he or she feels like an agreement has already occurred. Low-balling: Low-balling is a tactic frequently used by salesmen. They will initially quote a deceptively low offer and raise the price dramatically after an informal agreement has taken place but before a contract is signed. Ingratiation Technique This technique involves gaining someone's personal approval so they will be more likely to agree with a request. Ingratiation can include flattery, opinion conformity, and self-presentation (presenting one's own attributes in a manner that appeals to the target). For example, before Anna goes to ask for time off from her manager, Anthony, she does a little research and discovers that he enjoys golfing. When she sees Anthony next time, she starts out talking about her golfing trip last weekend, and later in the conversation she requests time off. Since Anna has now ingratiated herself with Anthony, he is more likely to comply with her request. Norm-of-Reciprocity Technique This is based on the social norm that people will return a favor when one is granted to them. Compliance is more likely to occur when the requester has previously complied with one of the target's requests. In psychology, conformity is defined as the act of matching attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors to group norms. Explain how certain motivators and factors may influence conformity Key Takeaways Key Points The two major motives in conformity are: 1) normative influence, or the tendency to conform in order to gain social acceptance; and 2) informational influence, which is based on the desire to obtain useful information through conformity and achieve a correct or appropriate result. Several factors are associated with increased conformity, including larger group size, unanimity, high group cohesion, and perceived higher status of the group. Other factors associated with conformity are culture, gender, age, and importance of stimuli. Minority influence is the degree to which a smaller faction within the group maintaining a different position on an issue influences the group during decision making. This influence is primarily informational. Key Terms conformity: The act of matching attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors to group norms. confederate: An actor who participates in a psychological experiment by pretending to be a subject while in actuality working for the researcher. norm: A rule that is enforced by members of a community. Conformity is the most common and pervasive form of social influence. It is informally defined as the tendency to act or think like members of a group. In psychology, conformity is defined as the act of matching attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors to group norms. While conformity is often viewed as a negative characteristic in American culture, it is very common. While high levels of conformity can be detrimental, a certain amount of conformity is necessary and normal, and even essential for a community to function. It is generally distinguished from obedience (behavior influenced by authority figures) and compliance (behavior influenced by peers). Motivations Underlying Conformity Conformity may result from either subtle, unconscious influences or direct and overt social pressure. It does not require the physical presence of others to occur—that is, knowledge of public opinion may cause an individual to conform to societal norms even when alone. There are two major motivators to conformity: normative influence and informational influence. Normative influence occurs when an individual conforms in order to gain social acceptance and avoid social rejection. For instance, men's and women's views of what the ideal body image is have changed over time. Both men and women will conform to current norms in order to be accepted by society and avoid social rejection. Informational influence occurs when individuals seek out members of their own group to obtain and accept accurate information about reality. For instance, if Susan lands a really prestigious, high-paying job, she is more likely to be offered similarly high-paying jobs in the future because potential employers will be influenced by their peers' previous decisions about her. The opposite effect is true as well: if Susan has been unemployed for a long time, employers may assume it is because others have not wanted to hire her. They will, therefore, try harder to find flaws in her and her application. A number of factors are known to increase the likelihood of conformity within a group. Some of these are as follows: Group size—larger groups are more likely to conform to similar behaviors and thoughts than smaller ones. Unanimity—individuals are more likely to conform to group decisions when the rest of the group's response is unanimous. Cohesion—groups that possess bonds linking them to one another and to the group as a whole tend to display more conformity than groups that do not have those bonds. Status—individuals are more likely to conform with high-status groups. Culture—cultures that are collectivist exhibit a higher degree of conformity than individualistic cultures. Gender—women are more likely to conform than men in situations involving surveillance, but less likely when there is no surveillance. Societal norms establish gender differences that affect the ways in which men and women conform to social influence. Age—younger individuals are more likely to conform than older individuals, perhaps due to lack of experience and status. Importance of stimuli—individuals may conform less frequently when the task is considered important. This was suggested by a study where participants were told that their responses would be used in the design of aircraft safety signals, and conformity decreased. Minority influence—minority factions within larger groups tend to have influence on overall group decisions. This influence is primarily informational and depends on consistent adherence to a position, the degree of defection from the majority, and the status and self-confidence of the minority members. Research on Conformity Asch Solomon Asch's conformity experiments are one of the best-known illustrations of conformity. His initial experiment in 1951 was set up as follows: The research participant was told he was participating in a simple "perceptual" task. The participant would enter a room and sit at a table with several other people. These people were confederates, or individuals who were posing as other participants but were really working for the researchers. The participant and confederates would be shown a series of cards that had a reference line and another card that had three comparison lines. Over the course of several trials, subjects were required to select the comparison line that corresponded in length to the reference line. The participant and confederates were instructed to provide their answers out loud, and the confederates were told to sometimes unanimously provide a correct answer and sometimes an incorrect answer. When Asch had the confederates all choose the same obviously incorrect answer, participants also chose the wrong line 37% of the time. In a control group with no pressure to conform, participants had an error rate of less 1%. Solomon Asch and conformity: The image shows an example from Solomon Asch's landmark experiment in conformity (1951). An individual was asked to state which line, A, B, or C, matched the first line. If the other members of the group gave an obviously incorrect response, the participant was more likely to also give an obviously incorrect response (A or B). Asch repeated this experiment with different experimental variables and identified several factors that influence conformity. Presence of a true partner, who was another real participant and gave the correct response, decreased levels of conformity. Removing this partner halfway through the study caused increased levels of conformity after their departure. Group size also influenced levels of conformity such that smaller groups resulted in less conformity than larger groups. Public responses, those that were spoken in the presence of the confederates, were associated with higher levels of conformity than private, written responses. Sherif Muzafer Sherif was interested in knowing how many people would change their opinions to bring them in line with the opinion of a group. In his experiment (1936), participants were placed in a dark room and asked to stare at a small dot of light 15 feet away. They were then asked to estimate the amount it moved; however, there was no real movement. Perceived motion was caused by the visual illusion known as the autokinetic effect. On the first day, each person perceived different amounts of movement, as they participated in the experiment individually. From the second through the fourth day of the study, estimates were agreed upon by the group. Because there was no actual movement, the number that the group agreed on was a direct result of group conformity. Sherif suggested this was a reflection of how social norms develop in larger society.

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