SOCIAL INFLUENCE

MBCh.B LEVEL II

INTRODUCTION

☐ **Social Influence**:

▪ Changes in a person's behavior induced by the actions of another person. (Someone else influences your decision, your behaviour etc.)

OUTLINE

- Group Influence
    - De-individuation
    - Social facilitation
    - Social loafing
    - Group polarization
    - Group think
    - Minority influence
    - Bystander intervention
- Conformity
- Persuasion
- Cultural influence

What is a group…?

- 5 people waiting at the corner for a bus?
- People attending a worship service?
- The rolling stones fan club?
- The students in a seminar class?
- The students in our class?

According to Myers & Spencer:

- Groups consist of two or more people who interact and influence one another and
- Perceive one another as 'us'.

- A set of people who have at least one of the following characteristics:
  - Joint membership in a social category based on sex, race, or other attributes.
  - Direct interactions with each other over a period of time (e.g., work colleagues).
  - A shared, common fate, identity, or set of goals (e.g., political groups).

Purpose of the group

- A group may exist for a number of reasons
1) To meet a need to belong
2) To provide information
3) To supply rewards
4) To accomplish goals

Types of group influence

- **De-individuation**

  - The loss of self-awareness and moral self-restraint in a group situation that fosters arousal and anonymity

  - De-individuation theory is a social psychological account of the individual in the crowd

  - De-individuation is a psychological state of decreased self-evaluation, causing disinhibited behavior

What circumstances elicit this psychological state?

1) Group Size

❑ A group has the power to:

a) Arouse its members

b) Render them unidentifiable

❑ The bigger the mob, the more the members lose self-awareness – more willing to do bad things such as burning, shouting and dismembering the victim.

Mullen (1986)

- Bigger the mob, the greater the atrocities

2) *Physical Anonymity*

- Anonymity makes one less self-conscious and more responsive to cues present in the situation whether positive or negative.

- For example, given altruistic cues, de-individuated people even give more money.

3) *Arousing and distracting activities*

- Aggressive outbursts by large groups are preceded by actions or activities that arouse and divert people's attention.
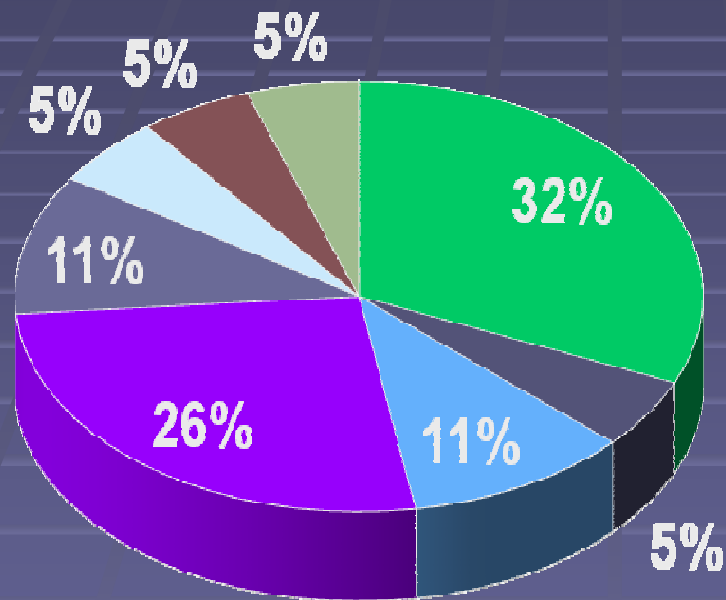
Diminished self-Awareness

- De-individuation decreases in circumstances that increase self – awareness.

- Circumstances that diminish self-awareness (as alcohol consumption) increase de-individuation.

- Alcohol consumption: Increase social arousal reduces self-awareness, reduces inhibitions

Reducing de-individuation

- Making people self-aware e.g. at the sporting events (have them act in front of a mirror or TV camera). This seems to reduce de-individuation

❑ *Social facilitation*
- Triplett (1898)
  - The tendency of people to perform simple or well-learned tasks better when others are present.
  - The presence of others, whether in competition or not, boosts well-learned performance
- Zajonc (1965)
  - The presence of others increases physiological arousal
  - Arousal enhances whatever response tendency is dominant.

- Bob Zajonc suggested that we can understand the influence others have on performance by considering three factors:
  - Arousal
  - Dominant response
  - Task difficulty
  - ❑ Presence of Others
  - Increases physiological arousal – energizes us
  - Arousal facilitates dominant response
  - Dominant response
    - Simple task – perform well
    - Difficult task – do not perform well

- **Distraction - conflict theory**
  - **Baron, Moore and Sanders (1978)**
  - Believe that individuals experience greater distraction when they perform various task in front of an audience than when they perform them alone

❑ *Social Loafing*

- The tendency for people to be less productive when they work with others than when they are individually accountable (Ringelmann, 1913).

- Ringelmann (1880s): Individual output declines on pooled tasks.

- When several people work in a task, some may engage in social loafing – they pretend to work hard, in fact put out less effort than they would if they were working alone.

❑ ***When does loafing happen***

- **Diffusion of responsibility:**
  - In a group we feel able to share responsibility and this may lead to a reduction of effort

- **Free-rider effect:**
  - If we feel like our contribution is not essential…still benefit from the group and *give little in return* (low input, high output)

- **Sucker effect:**
  - Willing to do your share but *not more* than that (esp. if others are free-riding)
  - Since everyone is benefiting and getting credit, you don't want to be the sucker who does all the work (and no recognition), therefore do the *minimum* requirement

When is social loafing less

- **If personal efforts are identifiable**
- If a task is challenging, appealing, or involving
- **If the task is meaningful and important**
- If we think our contribution is essential
- **If we are working with friends vs. strangers**
- If the group expects to be punished for poor performance
- If the group is small
- If the group is cohesive

Theories of social loafing

1) ***The collective effort model (CEM)***

- Individuals try hard on a collective task when they think their efforts will help them achieve outcomes they personally value

- The theory suggests that individuals will work hard on a given task only to the extent that the following conditions exists.

a) They believe that working hard will lead to better performance

a) They believe that better performance will be recognized and rewarded

b) That the rewards obtained are ones valued and desired.

- The (CEM) predicts that social loafing will be weakest when:

a) Individuals work in small rather than larger groups.

b) When they work on interesting and important tasks.

a) When they work with respected others.

b) When they expect their co-workers to perform poorly

c) When they come from cultures that emphasizes individual effort and outcomes rather than group outcomes (e.g. western cultures vs Asian cultures)

- This theory concluded that people tend to free ride on the group effort meaning people benefit from the but give little in return. (Social loafing).

Preventing social loafing

- Social loafing occurs less when the task is:
  - Challenging
  - Appealing
  - Involving
  - Group members are friends (i.e., cohesiveness)

Reducing social loafing

- Make sure that individuals are identifiable!! Because under these circumstances people cant sit back and let others do their work so social loafing is reduced.

- Increase commitment because pressure towards working hard will serve to offset temptations to engage in social loafing.

- Increase importance or value of task

- Make individual's responsibility unique

❑ *Groupthink*

- A mode of group thinking that impairs decision making because the desire for group harmony overrides a realistic appraisal of the possible decision alternatives.

- They seem to have a greater desire to get along and agree with one another than to generate and critically evaluate alternative viewpoints and positions

- The deterioration of group judgment produced by striving for consensus

Symptoms of groupthink

- The group overestimating their might and right…
  - Illusions of invulnerability- over-optimism, blind to warnings
  - Unquestioned belief in the group's morality
- Members become close-minded
  - Rationalization discounts challenges by justifying their decisions
  - Holding a stereotyped view of the opponent (weak, dumb)

- **Pressures toward uniformity**
  - Conformity pressure- those who raise doubts are rebuffed. (ridiculed)
  - Self censorship- disagreements are uncomfortable
  - Illusions of unanimity-everyone keeps quite, seems like everyone is unanimous
  - Mind-guards-some members keep information (that would lead to question) from the group

How can we prevent groupthink

- Be impartial; don't endorse any position
- Encourage critical evaluation; devil's advocate
- Subdivide the group
- Encourage and welcome criticisms from outsiders
- Before implementing, call a second-chance meeting
- Encourage members to share their views with others for feedback.
- Talk about the nature and causes

Brainstorming…..

True or False?

People brainstorming as a group come up with a greater number of better ideas than the same number of people working individually.

- A technique that attempts to increase the production of creative ideas by encouraging group members to speak freely without criticizing their own or others' contributions

Factors That Reduce the Effectiveness of Group Brainstorming

- **Production blocking:** When people have to wait for their turn to speak, they may forget their ideas, may be too busy trying to remember their ideas to listen to others or to generate new ones, or may simply lose interest.

- **Free riding:** As others contribute ideas, individuals may feel less motivated to work hard themselves. They see their own contributions as less necessary or less likely to have much impact.

- **Evaluation apprehension:** In the presence of others, people may be hesitant to suggest wild, off-the-wall ideas for fear of looking foolish and being criticized. Even if they are willing to suggest such ideas, they may spend time preparing to justify them—time that they otherwise could have spent coming up with more ideas.

- **Performance matching:** Group members work only as hard as they see others work. Once the other three factors have reduced the performance of a brainstorming group, performance matching can help maintain this relatively inferior performance.

Group polarization

- The exaggeration through group discussion on initial tendencies in the thinking of group members
- Originally, this effect was labeled the "*risky-shift*" phenomenon

- Imagine you were considering the pros and cons of going to grad school, and you talked it over with two groups:
  - **Your family:**
    - **Who was initially slightly opposed to the idea**
  - **Your fellow students:**
    - **Who were initially slightly favorable**

- Moscovici and Zavalloni (1969)
- Here group discussion enhanced the average inclination of group members…
  - French students liked their premier more, but Americans less, after discussing these topics in a group

  Myers and Bishop (1970)
- Used high and low prejudiced high school students as participants…
  - Had them talk about racial attitudes with like-minded students
    - Results?

Why do groups polarize after discussion?

- **Persuasive arguments**
  - With even a slight bias in one direction, you'll hear more favorable arguments on that side
- **Social comparison**
  - When members realize the group is leaning in one direction, they may seek acceptance by moving further in that direction

Minority influence

- As groups influence our ideas and decisions we make so do individuals and as minority group.
- Minority influence on majority can only be successful if the majority group is:

a) Consistent in their opposition to majority.

b) Membership of the minority should not appear to be rigid and dogmatic

c) Self confidence e.g. taking the head of the table tend to raise self doubts among the minority

d) Defections from the majority can also strengthen the position of the minority

Bystander intervention

- The probability of a person's helping in an emergency is greater when there are no other bystanders than when there are bystanders.

CONFORMITY/COMPLIANCE OR OBEDIENCE

Conformity & Obedience

- Behavior is contagious. We model or follow the behavior of others to conform.

- Other behaviors may be the expression of compliance (obedience) toward authority.

The Chameleon Effect

- Conformity: adjusting one's behavior or thinking to coincide with a group standard (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999).

- **CONFORMITY**
- A change in behaviour 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
- The insincere outward conformity is compliance
- **ACCEPTANCE**
- Conformity that involves both acting and believing in accord with social pressure
- The sincere inward conformity is acceptance

When do people conform

1) **Group size**
   - Researchers found that groups of 3 0r 5 people elicit much more conformity than 1 or 2 people
   - Similarly 2 groups of 3 elicited more conformity than one group of 6, and 3 groups of 2 people elicited even more.

2) **Unanimity**
   - Increases one's social courage.

3) **Cohesion**
   - Group members who are attracted to the group are responsive to its influences. They do not like disagreeing with the group members

4) Status

- Conformity also varies with regard to status. Studies have shown that people of lower status conform more than those of higher status (Milgram, 1974).

5) Public response

- Experiments show that people conform more when they respond publicly before others than when they write their answers privately.

Reasons for Conformity

Normative Social Influence:

- Influence resulting from a person's desire to gain approval or avoid rejection.
- Respecting normative behavior, because price may be severe if not followed.

Informative Social Influence:

- The group may provide valuable information, only stubborn people will never listen to others

Who conforms

- Are some people more susceptible to social influence?

1) Gender

- Among Americans women tend to conform more than men

- This is because women are more empathetic and socially sensitive

- Women are slightly more flexible, more open and responsive to their social environment, more concerned with interpersonal relationships

- Women accept influence whereas men exert influence.

2) Personality

- The relationship between personality characteristics and conformity has not been established.

- Every psychological event depends on the state of the person and at the same time on the environment although their relative importance is different in different cases

3) Culture

- Cultural background does predict how conforming one would be and vary from culture to culture

- Conformity experiments suggest that people in a collectivistic culture, such as the Bantu of Zimbabwe, tend to be more responsive to social norms.
- Euro – American cultures teach individualism.
- Asian and other nonwestern cultures are more likely to teach collectivism.
- A study found that children from collectivistic cultures were more compliant with adult expectations than children from individualistic cultures.
- Conformity and obedience are universal phenomena, yet they vary by culture (Bond, 1988, Triandis et al, 1988)

Conditions that Strengthen Conformity

1. One is made to feel incompetent or insecure.
2. The group has at least three people.
3. The group is unanimous.
4. One admires the group's status and attractiveness.
5. One has no prior commitment to response.
6. The group observes one's behavior.
7. One's culture strongly encourages respect for social standard.

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Why We Comply

Compliance: acting in accordance with a direct request from another person or group.

Foot-in-the-door technique: compliance to a large request is gained by preceding it with a very small request.

Door-in-the-face technique: compliance is gained by starting with a large, unreasonable request that is turned down, and then following it with a smaller, more reasonable request.

More Compliance Techniques

- **The low-ball technique:** compliance to a costly request is gained by first getting compliance to an attractive, less costly request but then reneging on it (introductory offers)

- **The that's-not-all technique:** compliance to a planned second request with additional benefits is gained by presenting this request before a response can be made to a first request.

Obedience

Obedience: Following the commands of a person in authority.

Classic Milgram study: Volunteer told to teach another person (actually an accomplice in the experiment) word pairs by applying an electric shock each time the learner was wrong. The learner also told the volunteer that he had a heart condition.

65% obeyed by going all the way to 450 volts on the "shock machine" even though the learner eventually could not answer any more questions.

Resisting social pressure

- Individuals should have the power to resist social pressure since they are not puppets.
- Some times when people are under pressure they experience reactance – motivation to defy and maintain freedom.
- When reactance is experienced by group members simultaneously then there may be a rebellion.
- While we are conscious not to differ from the others in a group situation, we act in a way that we preserve our uniqueness and individuality.

PERSUASION

- Two routes to persuasion
1) *Central route*
- Occurs when people are naturally analytical or involved in the issue.

2) Peripheral route

- Occurs when issues do not engage peoples systematic thinking.
- Central route persuasion being more thoughtful and less superficial is more durable and more likely than peripheral route persuasion to influence behaviour.

The Elements of persuasion

1) ***The Communicator***

❖ **Credibility**

▪ A credible communicator is perceived to be an expert and trustworthy

▪ People who speak unhesitatingly, who talk fast, who look listeners straight in the eye seem more credible

❖ **Attractiveness**

▪ An attractive communicator, who is appealing, or similar to the audience also is effective in persuasion on matters of taste and personal values.

2) The content of the message
- Emotional factors can play a role
- Associating a message with good feelings makes it more convincing. For example with eating, listening to music or drinking are convincing.

3) The channels of communication
a) Face – to –face
b) Media

4) The Audience
- Who receives the message is important.
- The age of the audience also makes a difference
- The young are more unstable recipients than the old

Case studies in persuasion

❑ **Cult indoctrination**

- Religious cult succeed in persuasion because of the powerful persuasion processes.

- They apply principles of effective persuasion

❑ **Persuasion in counseling and psychotherapy**

- Mental health workers recognize that changing the attitude or behaviour of the patient or client requires persuasion.

Questions?

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