## CONFORMITY AND NON-CONFORMITY

### DEPTH STUDY

#### CONCEPTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONCEPT</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>DEINDIVIDUATION</strong></td>
<td>The loss of self-awareness when in a group, allowing more anonymity and for individuals to feel less responsible for their actions</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DEVIANECE</strong></td>
<td>The action of departing from an established norm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SOCIAL COGNITION</strong></td>
<td>A sub-topic of social psychology, focusing on how people process, store and play information to other people and situations</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SELF-CONCEPT</strong></td>
<td>Composed of various identities, attitudes, beliefs and values that an individual holds to themselves, and by which they define themselves</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STEREOTYPE</strong></td>
<td>A widely held, but fixed and oversimplified idea/image of a particular group of people</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>WORLD-VIEW</strong></td>
<td>A certain philosophy of life, or conception of the world</td>
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<td><strong>SOCIAL-COHESION</strong></td>
<td>When society works together to achieve higher levels of wellbeing for all</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>VALUES</strong></td>
<td>Deeply held ideas and beliefs that guide our thinking and behaviour.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>CONFORMITY</strong></td>
<td>When individuals behave in certain ways as a result of group pressure, whether real or imagined</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OBEEDIENCE</strong></td>
<td>When an individual or group changes their behaviour as a result of a demand from authority</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NORMS</strong></td>
<td>Implicit, unsaid rules, shared by a group of individuals, that guide their interactions with others</td>
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### CONFORMITY AND OBEDIENCE

**conformity**

- **normative**
  - Conformity out of a need to be accepted
  - Often caused by fear of the possible negative consequences of not fitting with a group
  - A person wants to avoid conflict and rejection
  - They want to be accepted as part of a group

- **informative**
  - Conformity out of the belief that other people are correct
  - People need to be right
  - They lack information or don’t know the answer
  - Assumes that others probably know more than they do
- Looks to others for help when they are unsure
- Assuming the majority is more reliable

factors affecting
- Age
  - Adolescences are more likely to conform
- Attractiveness of a group
  - More likely to conform if their group is ‘attractive’
- Consensus
- Culture
  - Collectivist cultures conform more
- Difficulty of the task
  - Increased difficulty = more likely to conform
- Ethical and moral standards
- Self-esteem/ concept
  - Better self-esteem, less likely to conform
- Size of the group
- Presence of an ally
- Age differences

obedience
- Obedience is when an individual or group changes their behavior as a result of the demand or command of authority.
- It is a voluntary form of behavior where someone accepts instructions from someone else.
- While conformity is centered upon changing to fit in with a group because of social pressure, obedience relates to the influence of authority and the presence of a hierarchy and an imbalance of power that changes someone’s behavior.
- The social norm of obedience is that people should obey commands issued by a person with legitimate authority.

factors affecting
- PROXIMITY
  - People are more likely to obey if the authority is close by
- PUNISHMENT
  - Avoid punishment by obeying
- SETTING
  - People are more obedient in formal setting and if there are others in the same setting who willingly obey
- STATUS
  - Orders from higher status = more likely to obey
- Rewards = obedience
- LAWS
  - Disobedience can lead to punishment such as jail time, social repercussions
- EDUCATION
  - People are educated on the importance of obeying authority figures
- INDEPENDENCE
  - Personality and self-awareness affect the degree of obedience
- RELIGION
  - beliefs and values of religious group can affect obedience
- AUTHORITY FIGURE
  - Obedience depends on status of authority figure and their proximity
- PROXIMITY OF VICTIM
  - Chance of harm = higher chance of obedience
- PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY
  - Milgram’s study: Personal responsibility for harm = level of obedience drops
- ESCALATION OF HARM
  - Milgram’s study: More harm that the ‘student’ is experiencing, obedience of participant drops to prevent further harm
- IDENTIFIABILITY
  - Knowledge of personal information = more likely to obey

**RESPONSES TO SOCIAL INFLUENCE**

- Social influence refers to how peoples opinions, actions and emotions are influenced by a social group.
- What changes people's behaviour is their personal evaluation of the situation and the extent to which they are persuaded by others.
- This tendency to conform occurs in small groups and/or society as a whole, and may result from subtle unconscious influences, or direct and overt social pressure.
- Conformity can occur in the presence of others, or when an individual is alone.
- For an example, people tend to follow social norms when eating or watching television, even when alone.
- People often conform from a desire for security within a group - typically a group of a similar age, culture, religion, or educational status.
- This is often referred to as groupthink

**sources of social influence (bases of power)**

- EXPERT
  - Influence through detailed knowledge
- COERCIVE
  - Influence through the threat of force to gain compliance
- REFERENT
  - Influence through charisma, connection and personal affinity
- INFORMATION
  - Influence through access to or control of, sensitive data
- LEGITIMATE
  - Influence from those selected, appointed to or elected in superior positions
- REWARD
  - Influence by positive or negative rewards offered for certain behaviours

**acquiescence**

- The reluctant acceptance of something without protest
- There may be change in behaviour, but not attitude
- Change in behaviour will last as long as there is a reward
- In groups, it occurs because of peer pressure and to avoid conflict
internalisation
- When individuals modify their behaviour if they think the group to which they belong is right
- People adopt opinions, behaviours and actions of the group and incorporate them into their own life
- Society’s rules and norms become part of individual personalities
- People want to be right, so their decision is based on society’s values

identification
- When people agree to give in to group pressure because they want to attain the qualities or characteristics possessed by certain members
- Social categorisation
- Ascertaining norms
- Self-stereotyping

DEINDIVIDUATION
- Deindividuation is the effect of a group on the behavior of its individual members.
- The theory assumes that when a person becomes part of a group, they become anonymous and have a reduced sense of self-awareness.
  - As a result of group membership, people experience a lack of restraint, loss of personal identity and diminished responsibility, and according to the theory, they then automatically become engaged in anti-social and aggressive behavior's.
- Caused by large groups and crowd psychology, which leads to loss of responsibility and personal identity
- Effects of deindividuation include
  - AGRESSION AND CRIME
    - Looting during riots
  - HEIGTENED EMOTIONS
    - Difficulty remembering sequence of events
  - IMPULSIVE/IRRATIONAL BEHAVIOUR
  - LACK OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTIONS
    - Vietnam soldiers saying they had no guilt
  - ABSENCE OF SELF-AWARENESS
- In its extreme form, deindividuation can lead to the dehumanisation of victims
  - Victims are regarded by their attackers as being less-than human (this is accentuated when the identity of the victim is unknown)

DETERMINING BOUNDARIES
- Non-conformity is the deviation from social norms, and occurs when the rules and expectations of groups/society are violated
- Society is based on the operation of majority influence and consensus
- People and groups can have competing or contradicting interests that differ from the shared interests of the majority
- Shared behavioural guidelines, rules and expectations are established and social relationships are formed
- Many norms are unwritten and not frequently articulated, so you may not be aware of violating them until after the fact
- Social cues are also an indicator of inappropriate behaviours
  - Verbal, non-verbal, social exclusion

**types of general social norms**
- [**LEGAL NORMS**]
  - Connected to the law and established for the common good of society
  - Clear boundaries and penalties are set
- [**RELIGIOUS NORMS**]
- [**MORAL NORMS**]

**other social norms**
- Swearing at shopkeepers
- Loud phone calls in a public place
- Hooking up in public

**SOCIAL COSTS AND BENEFITS**

- At times nonconformity is celebrated and provides a refreshing change or challenge to the status quo. It is needed to test the constraints of modern society.
- *Andrew Bergerson* states that nonconformists present themselves the way they do because they believe they are ethically superior and to give themselves a greater self-concept.
  - However, he goes on to say that others, such as racists, also see themselves as non-conformists.
- At times, nonconformity is completely inappropriate and may lead to causing someone or something harm.

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<th>COSTS TO WIDER SOCIETY</th>
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<td>- Clarifies social norms and makes boundaries more obvious</td>
<td>- Widespread suspicion of nonconformist groups</td>
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<td>- Increases unity within a group</td>
<td>- Unproductive deviance</td>
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<td>- Seeks to celebrate differences</td>
<td>- Structural violence and inequality</td>
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<td>- Spurs social change</td>
<td>___Disruption of social order</td>
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<td>- Identity is expressed openly and freely</td>
<td>- Erodes trust</td>
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<td>- Acute awareness of legal and political rights</td>
<td>- Social exclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Celebration of diverse individuals within society (LGBTQ+)</td>
<td>- Stigmatisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>___Greater participation in public life</td>
<td>- Psychological damage and uncertainty about acceptance</td>
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<tr>
<td>___Strengthened viewpoints and empowerment</td>
<td>- Confusion about identity</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Not feeling safe</td>
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<td>- Fear of victimisation</td>
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DEVIANCE

- Low status persons (ethnic minorities, poor people) are more likely to be perceived as deviant than those who are higher in status (doctors, priests etc).

micro explanations
- SOCIAL CONTROL THEORY
  - encouragement to conform = likely chance to deviate
- RATIONAL CHOICE THEORY
  - the decision to be deviant depends upon a cost/benefit analysis of sanctions
- DIFFERENTIAL ASSOCIATION THEORY
  - conformity or deviance is learned from those we spend time with
- LABELLING THEORY
  - Behaviour is not intrinsically deviant, but becomes deviant because it is labelled as such
  - Members of a society define (label) what is deviant and impose sanctions for that behaviour
  - Individuals who engage in primary deviance are not labelled, but those who engage in secondary deviance are
  - Being labelled can reinforce deviant behaviour by:
    - Increasing alienation
    - Forcing increased interaction with deviant peer
    - Motivating juvenile delinquents to positively value and identify with the deviant status
  - Deviance becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy
  - Those with less power in society are more likely to be labelled as deviants.

meso/macro explanations
- ANOMIE
  - The breakdown of the norms guiding behaviour leads to social disorganisation
- STRAIN THEORY
  - Fewer resources means persons resort to deviant behaviour
  - Some ways of adapting to strain include
    - Conformity
      - Embracing society’s definition of success
    - Innovation
      - Using illicit means to reach goals
    - Ritualism
      - Strictly adhering to culturally prescribed rules
    - Retreatism
      - Giving up on both the goal and means
    - Rebellion
      - Using alternative strategies to reach the goal

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<tr>
<th>COST OF DEVIANCE</th>
<th>BENEFITS OF DEVIANCE</th>
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<tr>
<td>negatives</td>
<td>positives</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Could hurt certain people in society</td>
<td>- Protects people (like the biker gang)</td>
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</table>
- Against the law
- Doesn’t benefit anyone
- May go against moral values and religious beliefs
- May come at a cost (e.g., being jailed for breaking the law)
- Deviance is expensive (removing graffiti)
- Deviance stimulates more deviance
- Deviance erodes trust
- Deviance, if not corrected/punished, can result in nonconformity of others

- Individuality
- Creates a sense of identity for some individuals/groups
- Can benefit other people
- Clarifies norms
- Increases unity within a society or group
- Deviance promotes needed social change
- Deviance clarifies norms (know where you stand and support)

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**AGENDA SETTING**

- Agenda setting is the idea that what the public thinks about is set or influenced by the media.
- The theory states that the news plays an integral part in the shaping of political realities.
- The amount of time spent focused on an issue, and the information relayed in a news story, along with the story’s position, all determine how much a reader learns and the amount of importance placed on the issue.
- When analysing agenda setting, there are two basic assumptions;
  - 1. Media and the press filter and shape reality rather than reflect it
  - 2. When media focuses on just a few issues and subjects, the public tends to perceive those issues as more important.

**Technology and Agenda Setting**

- Advances in technology provide many new avenues for influencing the masses.
- At the onset of the agenda setting theory, communication was conducted primarily through print and radio, followed by film and TV.
- Today, communication sources are nearly unlimited, allowing greater public engagement and setting the trend for increased attention on agenda setting.

**Consequences of Agenda Setting**

- The effects of having no choice about the messages we hear and the consistent approach to certain views in order to shape our thoughts has quite profound effects on attitude formation.
- It means particular groups in society may be unfairly targeted and portrayed in unjustifiably positive/negative light.
  - The dehumanisation and demonization of some groups, such as asylum seekers.
    - Disproportionate news coverage
  - People tend to immediately form an opinion about a group rather than adopt a neutral position. They do not engage in analysis, relying on the manipulated information they have seen over and over.
    - This is called priming - it is a tactic usually used in relation sensitive political issues
  - The salience of issues influences observable group behaviours.