Module 44 Social Influence

44-1 Conformity

**The chameleon effect**- defined in 1999 after observing and researching automatic mimicry. Behaviors and moods are contagious.

Positive side of mood linkage and mimicry - helps us empathize- bonding

Negative side -Suggestibility & mimicry can lead to copycat violence (behavior clusters)

**Solomon Asch** (1955) study "Which of the three comparison lines is equal to the standard line? Answering alone -erred less than 1%, in a group about 1/3 answered against what they believed or doubted what they saw to conform to the group. (see video)

**Normative social influence**- to avoid rejection or to gain social approval.

**informational social influence**- willingness to accept others' opinions about reality because we want to be accurate.

Western Europeans & people in English speaking countries prize individualism where conformity rates are lower than many people in collectivist countries where group standards have a higher value such as Asian, African, and Latin American countries.

44-2 & 3 Obedience

Stanley Milgrim's 1963 Yale university experiment found about 2/3 or 60-65 % of "teachers" administered the highest levels of voltage to the "learners." The result Milgrim found is, *"Ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process."*

• Research subjects thought the experiment was about learning.

• 40 psychiatrists predicted people would stop when the learner indicated pain.

• Replication of the study showed the same results with men and women.

• Milgrim used the Foot-in-the door effect with first shocks being harmless.

• The 1/3 who resisted tended to do so early. After the first acts of compliance or resistance, attitudes began to follow and justify behavior.

• Milgrim found obedience was highest when:

1. Legitimate authority was close at hand and giving the orders.

2. Authority figure was supported by a prestigious institution.

3. Victim was at a distance, depersonalized, or in another room.

4. There were no role models for defiance.

Other examples: *• Students following hazing orders to initiate new members. • Employees following orders to produce and market harmful products • Soldiers following orders to punish and torture prisoners.*

44-4 Group Behavior

**Social facilitation** - stronger responses on simple or well-learned tasks in the presence of others.

Norman Triplett - (1889) Adolescents winding fishing reel faster in the presence of someone else doing the same thing.

We become aroused when others observe us which amplifies our reactions. This strengthens our most likely response - correct one on an easy task, incorrect one on a more difficult task.

(*Home team advantage*)

Crowding triggers arousal- Strengthens reactions - positive or negative

**Social loafing** is the tendency for people to exert less effort in a group than when individually accountable. Examples - tug of war- group less, clapping in a crowd- less

Especially common among men in individualistic cultures.

1. Feel less accountable

2. View their individual contributions as dispensable

3. Shared benefits regardless of how much they contribute- slack off

Need to be highly motivated and strongly identify with the group to be most productive.

**Deindividuation**- loss of self-awareness and self-restraint when participating in a group. Arousal is high (*social facilitation*) and person is anonymous (as in *social loafing* with diminished personal feelings of responsibility)

Examples of anonymity: Ku Klux Klan, warriors, Internet bullies

Examples of group arousal experience: mob, rock concert, ballgame, worship

44-5 **Group Polarization** - Enhancement of group's prevailing inclinations through discussion within the group- strengthening attitudes as we discuss with like-minded people.

Positive- spiritual awareness, self-help groups, Internet sharing common inters or coping with challenges with kindred spirits.

Negative- Us versus Them mentality- views can grow more and more extreme. White supremacists become more racist, suicide terrorism builds from shared grievance thus self-radicalized terrorism cells grow. Internet virtual groups are isolated from differing opinions.

**Groupthink**- occurs when the desire for harmony in a decision-making group overrides a realistic appraisal of alternatives.

Fed by: • polarization • overconfidence • conformity and • self-justification

Examples: 1961 Bay of Pigs- John F. Kennedy, Anticipation of 1941 Pear Harbor attack, Vietnam war escalation, Challenger explosion, Iraq war WMD.

**Groupthink can be prevented if:**

1. Leader welcomes various opinions

2. Invites experts critiques

3. Assigns people to identify possible problems. (devil's advocate)

Diverse groups of varied perspectives often enable creative or superior outcomes.

**Power of the Individual**

The majority's general resistance to change can be influenced by the minority or an individual if:

One hold's firm to their position and doesn't waffle- self-confidence.

Examples: Gandhi's nonviolent appeals- gained independence from Britain in 1947

Rosa Parks' refusal to move to the back of the bus

Innovators and inventors such as Robert Fulton's steamboat (printing press, light bulbs, telegraph, typewriter)