



Psicologia dei Gruppi e delle Relazioni Sociali

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Theoretical Lessons (Part 1):

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- 2- An introduction to the group dynamics (2)***
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- 4- Inclusion and Identity***
- 5- Formation***
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Lesson: 8 - (1/4)

Title: **Influence**

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Lesson 8 Outline

- **Majority Influence: The Power of the Many**
 - *Influence*
 - *Predicting Majority Influence*
- **Minority Influence: The Power of the Few**
 - *Conversion Theory of Minority Influence*
 - *Predicting Minority Influence*
 - *Dynamic Social Impact Theory*
- **Sources of Group Influence**
 - *Informational Influence*
 - *Normative Influence*
 - *Interpersonal Influence*

An interpersonal undercurrent flows beneath the surface of most groups pushes group members together, toward greater consensus, uniformity, homogeneity, and conformity.

But other forces push members in divergent directions, promoting dissension, uniqueness, heterogeneity, and independence. Groups require both conformity and rebellion if they are to endure.

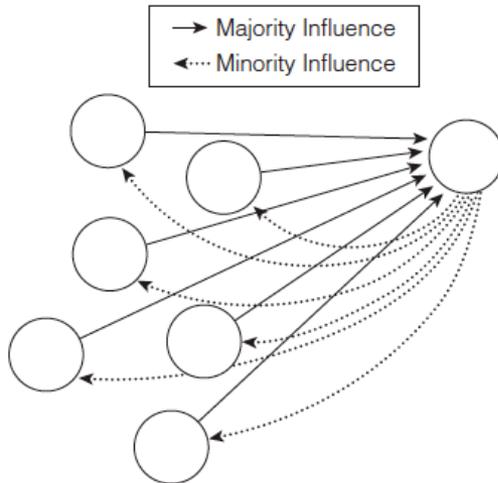


Influence

Majority Influence: The power of the many

Social Influence

Interpersonal processes that change the thoughts, feelings, or behaviors of another person sometimes directly but often very subtly and indirectly



Whereas majority influence increases the consensus within the group, minority influence sustains individuality and innovation.

FIGURE 7.1 Majority and minority influence in groups. In many cases, group members change as a result of direct group pressure by the majority (*majority influence*), but in other cases, one or more group members succeed in changing the entire group. This *minority influence* is indicated by the curved lines of influence from the lone minority back to the majority group members.



Influence

Majority Influence: The power of the many

Lone individuals are free to think and act as they choose, but group members must abandon some of their independence.

How strong is the urge to conform?

- Muzafer Sherif (1936) verified that group members modify their judgments so that they match those of others in their groups.
- Theodore Newcomb, in his 1943 study of Bennington students, showed that members of a group will gradually take as their own the group's position on political and social issues.

But was

- Solomon Asch who most clearly demonstrated the power of the many to influence the few (Asch, 1952, 1955, 1957).

Conformity

A change in opinion, judgment, or action to match the opinions, judgments, or actions of other group members or the group's normative standards.

Influence

Majority Influence: The power of the many

The Asch Experiment

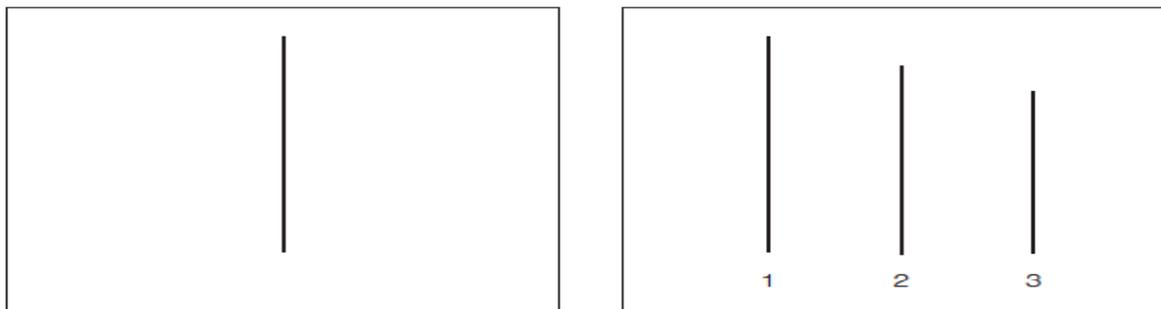


FIGURE 7.2 An example of the problems given to participants in the Asch study. Subjects were told to look at the standard line (on the card on the left) and then match it to one of the three lines on the card at the right. The task was an easy one, but all of the group members save the one true subject were Asch's confederates who deliberately made many mistakes. For example, of the lines shown here the standard line was 8 inches long, and comparison Line 1 was the correct answer. However, the group chose Line 2, which was actually 7 inches long.

SOURCE: Asch, 1952.

If you were a participant in Asch's experiment, you would have entered the test room thinking you were taking part in a simple study of visual acuity. After you and the rest of the participants sat down around the table, the experimenter would explain that he wanted the group to make a series of judgments about the length of some test lines. On each trial (or round), he would show you two cards. One card had a single line that was to serve as the standard. Three lines, numbered 1, 2, and 3, were displayed on the second card. Your job? Just pick the line that matched the standard line in length. As one test line was always the same length as the standard line, the correct answer was fairly obvious. On each trial, the experimenter displayed two cards and asked the participants to state their answers aloud, starting at the left side of the table. The first few trials passed uneventfully, with everyone in the group picking the correct answer. But on the third trial, the first participant picked Line 2, even though Line 1 was a closer match to the standard stimulus. To your surprise, each of the other group members followed the first participant's lead by selecting Line 2 as the correct answer. When your turn came to answer, would you go along with the group and select Line 2, or would you stand your ground and select Line 1?

Influence

Majority Influence: The power of the many

Many conformed when placed in the Asch situation, showing a “marked movement toward the majority” (Asch, 1963/2003, p. 297).

Asch Situation

An experimental procedure developed by Solomon Asch in his studies of conformity to group opinion. Participants believed they were making perceptual judgments as part of a group, but the other members were confederates who made deliberate errors on certain trials.

TABLE 7.1 Results of Asch’s Study of Conformity

Measure	Result (%)
How many members made at least one error?	76.4
How many times did the average member conform?	36.8
How many group members never conformed?	24.0
How many group members conformed 10 times or more?	11.0
How many individuals made at least one error when tested alone?	5.0

SOURCE: Data from Asch, 1952, 1957.

Influence

Majority Influence: The power of the many

How many people does it take to create maximum conformity? Is two against one enough? Are smaller groups less influential?

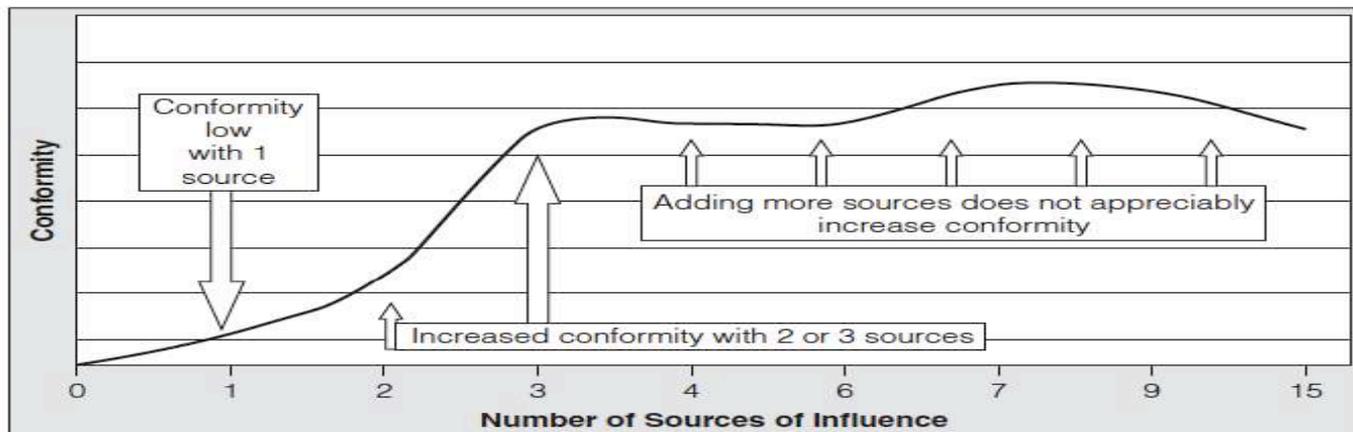


FIGURE 7.3 The relationship between conformity and group size. Studies conducted in a number of settings suggest that few people conform when they face just one other person who disagrees with them, but that conformity rises rapidly when a lone individual faces a group of two or three. Adding more people to the majority beyond three does not appreciably increase conformity.

Social Impact Theory

An analysis of social influence developed by Bibb Latané which proposes that the impact of any source of influence depends upon the strength, the immediacy, and number of people (sources) present.

Influence

Majority Influence: The power of the many

Social Responses

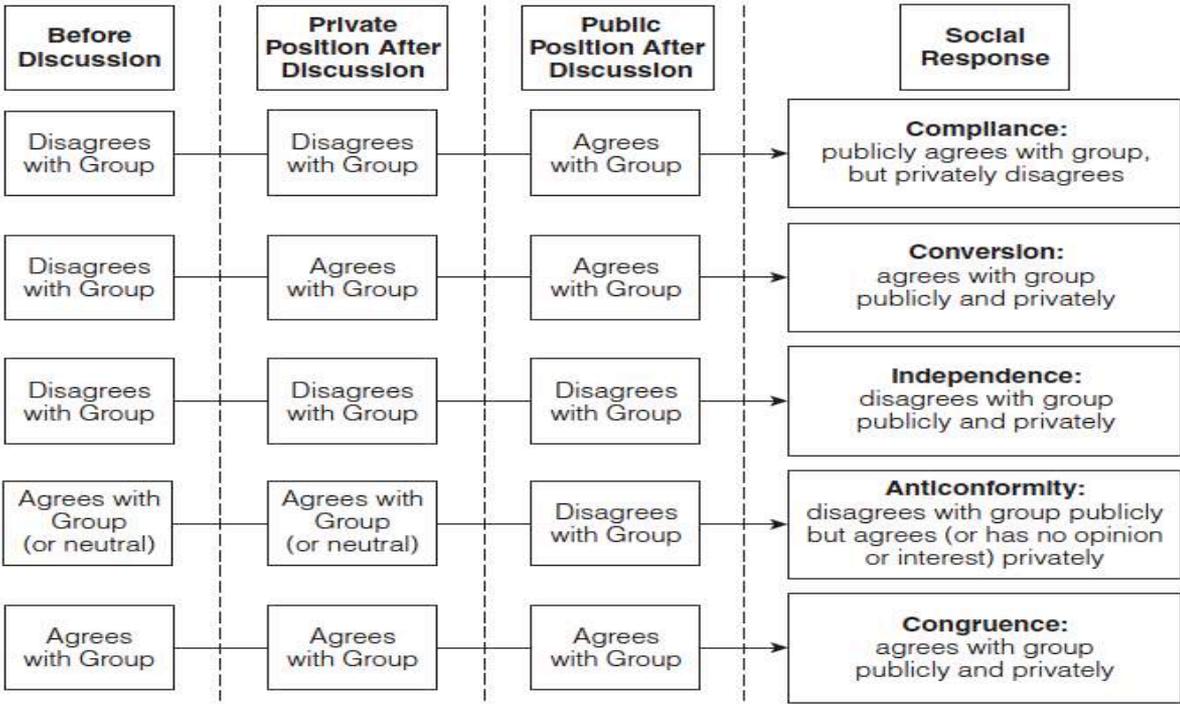


FIGURE 7.4 Forms of social response. When people react to group pressures, conformity can be labeled *compliance*, and nonconformity can be thought of as *anticonformity*. In the opposite situation, when the response is prompted by one's personal standards, conformity becomes *conversion*, and nonconformity, *independence*. People who agree with the group from the outset are not technically conformists, because they do not shift their opinion in the direction advocated by the group; they already hold that position. They display *congruence* with their groups.



Influence

Predicting Majority Influence

Conformity Across People: Asch discovered that people differed, to an extraordinary degree, in their reaction to the conformity situation.



TABLE 7.2 A Sampling of Personality Characteristics That Are Reliably Associated with Conformity and Nonconformity

Characteristic	Reaction to Influence
Age	Conformity increases until adolescence, and then decreases into adulthood (Costanzo & Shaw, 1966).
Authenticity	Individuals who are higher in dispositional authenticity tend to resist external influences (Wood et al., 2008).
Authoritarianism	Authoritarians respect and obey authorities and social conventions (Altemeyer, 1988; Feldman, 2003).
Big Five personality factors	Introverts experience more discomfort when disagreeing with a group, and so conform more (Matz, Hofstede, & Wood, 2008). Agreeableness, conscientiousness, and stability are associated with greater conformity (DeYoung, Peterson, & Higgins, 2002), but openness with less conformity (McCrae, 1996).
Birth order	First-born children tend to conform more than later-born children, who tend to be more rebellious and creative (Sulloway, 1996).
Dependency	People who are high in dependency (a strong motivation to please other people) display heightened compliance, conformity, and suggestibility (Bornstein, 1992).
Gender identity	Masculine individuals and androgynous individuals conform less on gender-neutral tasks than feminine individuals (Bem, 1982).
Individualism-collectivism	People from collectivistic cultures (e.g., Asians) value conformity as a means of achieving harmony with others, whereas those from individualistic cultures (e.g., European Americans) value uniqueness (Kim & Markus, 1999).
Individuation	People with a high desire to publicly differentiate themselves from others (<i>high individualators</i>) are more willing to express dissenting opinions and contribute more to group discussions (Whitney, Sagrestano, & Maslach, 1994).
Intelligence	Less intelligent people and individuals who are uncertain of their abilities conform more (Crutchfield, 1955).
Need for closure	Conformity pressures are stronger in groups with a preponderance of members with a high need for closure (De Grada et al., 1999).
Need for uniqueness	Individuals with a high need for uniqueness (NFU) are more likely to make unusual choices and prefer the unconventional to the conventional (Simonson & Nowlis, 2000).
Self-blame	Adolescents who tend to blame themselves for negative outcomes conform more than individuals low in self-blame (Costanzo, 1970).
Self-esteem	Individuals with low self-esteem conform more than individuals with moderate and high self-esteem (Berkowitz & Lundy, 1957); however, adolescents with high self-esteem conform more than those with low self-esteem (Francis, 1998).
Self-monitoring	High self-monitors, because of their higher self-presentational tendencies, conform more when striving to make a positive impression (Chen, Shechter, & Chaiken, 1996).
Yea-saying	Yea-sayers, particularly when working under a cognitive load, say "yes" faster and more frequently than individuals who thoughtfully consider their position (Knowles & Condon, 1999).



Influence

Predicting Majority Influence

TABLE 7.3 A Sampling of Group and Situational Characteristics That Reliably Increase and Decrease Conformity

Factor	Conformity Increases If	Conformity Decreases If
Accountability (Quinn & Schlenker, 2002)	Individuals are striving for acceptance by others whose preferences are known	Individuals are accountable for their actions and are striving for accuracy
Accuracy (Mausner, 1954)	Majority's position is reasonable or accurate	Majority position is unreasonable or mistaken
Ambiguity (Spencer & Huston, 1993)	Issues are simple and unambiguous	Issues are complex and difficult to evaluate
Anonymity (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955)	Responses are made publicly in face-to-face groups	Responses are anonymous and members cannot see each other
Attraction (Kiesler & Corbin, 1965)	Members are attracted to the group or its members	Members dislike each other
Availability of mating partners (Griskevicius et al., 2006)	Individuals are motivated to stand out from the crowd	Nonconformists could be revealed as incorrect
Awareness (Krueger & Clement, 1997)	Individuals are aware they disagree with the majority	Individuals do not realize their position is unusual
Cohesion (Lott & Lott, 1961)	Group is close-knit and cohesive	Group lacks cohesion
Commitment to position (Gerard, 1964)	Individuals are publicly committed to their position from the outset	Members' responses are not known to the other group members
Commitment to membership (Kiesler, Zanna, & DeSalvo, 1966)	Individuals are committed to remaining in the group	Groups or membership are temporary
Existential threat (Renkema et al., 2008)	Aspects of the situation trigger existential anxieties	Situation buffers individual from existential threat
Priming (Epley & Gilovich, 1999)	Unnoticed cues in the setting prime conformity	Situational cues prime independence
Size (Asch, 1955)	Majority is large	Majority is small
Task (Baron, Vandello, & Brunzman, 1996)	Task is important but very difficult	Task is important and easy, or task is trivial
Unanimity (Asch, 1955)	Majority is unanimous	Several members disagree with the majority



Lesson: 8 - (2/4)

Title: **Influence**

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Influence

Minority Influence: Conversion Theory

Historical examples demonstrate that the majority does not always overwhelm the dissenter, for sometimes it is the minority that is the influencer and the majority that is influenced.



Conversion Theory

Serge Moscovici's conceptual analysis of the cognitive and interpersonal processes that mediate the direct and indirect impact of a consistent minority on the majority.

Conversion theory suggests that **minorities influence in a different way than majorities** do.

Minorities: Moscovici theorized, influence through a validation process.

- When someone in the group breaks the group's unanimity, members take notice of this surprising turn of events.
- The minority captures their attention, and though most do not believe that the minority is correct, they nonetheless consider the arguments closely.
- The majority's message, in contrast, is less intriguing to members.



Influence

Predicting Minority Influence

The question changed, over time, from “Are minorities influential?” to “When are minorities influential?”

- *Minorities who argue consistently for their positions* but all the while manage to remain members in good-standing in the group given time, ***will shift the group’s consensus away from the majority’s position*** toward the one they favor (see Crano & Seyranian, 2007; Martin & Hewstone, 2008, for reviews).

Subsequent studies have confirmed the importance of behavioral consistency on the part of the minority, but also suggest that minorities must walk the line between appearing self-assured and unreasonable.



Influence

Predicting Minority Influence

Subsequent studies have confirmed the importance of behavioral consistency on the part of the minority, but also suggest that minorities must walk the line between appearing self-assured and unreasonable.

- ***Minorities are particularly influential when the majority interprets the consistency positively*** (Wood et al., 1994) and if minorities offer coherent, compelling arguments that contradict the majority's position (Clark, 1990).
- They are also ***more influential if they signal their confidence in their opinion*** by sitting at the head of the table (Nemeth & Wachtler, 1974) or by reminding the group of their experience (Shackelford, Wood, & Worchel, 1996).
- ***Successful minorities grant minor concessions to the majority*** (Pérez & Mungy, 1996), or ***engage in small talk about unrelated matters prior to revealing their position*** (Dolinski, Nawrat, & Rudak, 2001).
- In general, ***minorities are more influential when they are perceived to be team players who are committed, competent, and group centered*** (Levine & Russo, 1987).



Lesson: 8 - (3/4)

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Influence

Dynamic Social Impact Theory

But change in groups is actually a mutual process—the majority influences the minority, and the minority influences the majority.

Dynamic Social Impact Theory

Bibb Latané's extension of his social impact theory, which assumes that influence is a function of the strength, the immediacy, and the number of sources present, and that this influence results in consolidation, clustering, correlation, and continuing diversity in groups that are spatially distributed and interacting repeatedly over time.

Social impact theory suggests that influence is determined by the strength, immediacy, and number of sources present. Dynamic social impact theory extends this basic principle by describing how groups, as complex systems, change over time. Groups are not static, but constantly organizing and reorganizing in four basic patterns:

- **Consolidation,**
- **Clustering,**
- **Correlation,**
- **Continuing diversity** (Harton & Bullock, 2007; Latané, 1996, 1997; Latané & Bourgeois, 1996, 2001; Vallacher & Nowak, 2007).



Influence

Dynamic Social Impact Theory

Consolidation:

As individuals interact with one another regularly, their actions, attitudes, and opinions become more uniform.

For example, even when individuals are assigned at random to rooms in college dormitories, over the course of the academic year their attitudes on a variety of topics become more and more similar (Cullum & Harton, 2007). The opinions held by a majority of the group tend to spread throughout the group, and the minority dwindles in size.



Influence

Dynamic Social Impact Theory

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Clustering:

As the law of social impact suggests, people are more influenced by their closest neighbors, so clusters of group members with similar opinions emerge in groups.

Clustering is more likely when group members communicate more frequently with members who are close by and less frequently with more distant group members, and if members change locations to join similar others.



Influence

Dynamic Social Impact Theory

Correlation:

Over time, the group members' opinions on a variety of issues—even ones that are not discussed openly in the group—converge, so that their opinions become correlated.

Students living on the same floor of a dorm, for example, find that they agree on topics that they have discussed during the year—such as the value of certain majors or the best times to work out in the fitness center—but that they also agree on topics they have never discussed or even considered discussing: the value of labor unions, the benefits of the Greek system, and human cloning (Cullum & Harton, 2007).



Influence

Dynamic Social Impact Theory

Continuing diversity:

Because of clustering, members of minorities are often shielded from the influence attempts of the majority, and their beliefs continue within the group.

Diversity drops if the majority is very large and if the members of the minority are physically isolated from one another, but diversity continues when the minority members who communicate with the majority resist the majority's influence attempts.



Lesson: 8 - (4/4)

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Influence

Sources of Group Influence

Many people think of conformity in a negative way. They assume that people who change to agree with others are so weak-willed that they lack the independence to stand up for their personal beliefs. This pejorative view, unfortunately, underestimates the complexity of social influence, for individuals in any group change their behavior for a variety of reasons.

- First, *conformity is often the most reasonable response in a situation: when others are wellinformed but we ourselves are ignorant*, it's wise to use them as an informational resource.
- Second, *people often conform because they implicitly accept the legitimacy of the group and its norms*.
- Last, *conformity is often interpersonally rewarding*: Groups tend to be aggregations of like-minded individuals and so those who do not go along with the majority find that they are pressured to change.
- Then three main causes of conformity can be described—the **informational**, the **normative**, and the **interpersonal**—(Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Kelley, 1952).

Influence

Sources of Group Influence: Informational Influence

Informational Influence

Interpersonal processes that promote change by challenging the correctness of group members' beliefs or the appropriateness of their behavior directly (e.g., through communication and persuasion) or indirectly (e.g., through social comparison processes).

Informational influence occurs when group members use the responses of others in the group as reference points and informational resources.

- If one group member smiles or laughs, soon after, other group members will begin smiling (Semin, 2007).
- Frowns, too, are contagious, and will spread from one group member to another (Bourgeois & Hess, 2008).
- If a sufficiently large number of people begin to adopt a new fashion, hairstyle, or attitude, the rest of the group and community may adopt the craze as well (Gladwell, 2000).
- As Robert Cialdini's (2009) principle of social proof suggests, people assume that a behavior is the correct one when they see others performing it.



Influence

Sources of Group Influence: Social Comparison

Social Comparison

Social comparison theory assumes that group members, as active information processors, evaluate the accuracy of their beliefs and gauge the quality of their personal attributes by comparing themselves to other individuals.

The “social reality” upon which an opinion or attitude rests for its justification is the degree to which the individual perceives that this opinion or attitude is shared by others. An opinion or attitude that is not reinforced by others of the same opinion will become unstable generally. (Festinger et al., 1950, p. 168).

Judging from the number of models proposed by theorists, those who study majority and minority influence must be nonconformists themselves.

False Consensus Effect

Perceivers’ tendency to assume that their personal qualities and characteristics are common in the general population.



Influence

Sources of Group Influence: Dual Process

Dual Process Theories of Influence

In general, a conceptual analysis arguing that individuals change in response to direct forms of influence (such as persuasion) and indirect forms of influence (such as mimicking another's response).

Both majority and minority influence, like persuasion and other types of influence processes, result from direct and indirect cognitive processes.

Direct processes (or central, systematic processes) entail a thoughtful analysis, or elaboration, of the issues at hand. Group members, confronted with an opinion that is different from their own, review the arguments, look for weaknesses, reexamine their own ideas on the topic, and revise their position if revision is warranted.

Indirect processes (or peripheral, heuristic processes), in contrast, do not require very much mental effort or elaboration. During a group discussion members may not pay much attention, they do not really understand the arguments completely, and they forget what other people have suggested. Yet they still change their minds (Maio & Haddock, 2007).

Cognitive Heuristic

An inferential principle or rule of thumb that people use to reach conclusions when the amount of available information is limited, ambiguous, or contradictory.



Influence

Sources of Group Influence: Normative & Interpersonal Influence

Normative Influence

Personal and interpersonal processes that cause individuals to feel, think, and act in ways that are consistent with social norms, standards, and convention. Because individuals internalize their group's norms, they strive to act in ways that are consistent with those norms.

Normative influence, occurs when members tailor their actions and attitudes to match the norms of the group situation. Normative influence has, however, a personal, psychological foundation. Norms are not simply external constraints but internalized standards.

When people identify with their groups, they feel duty-bound to adhere to the group's norms; they accept the legitimacy of the established norms and they recognize the importance of supporting these norms. Thus, people obey norms not only because they fear the negative interpersonal consequences—ostracism, ridicule, punishment—that their nonconformity may produce, but also because they feel personally compelled to live up to their own expectations.

Normative influence generates conformity in a range of everyday situations. Even in relatively fleeting social encounters, individuals are loath to violate the implicit rules that specify the “normal” way to act Milgram (1992).

Interpersonal Influence

Social influence that results from other group members selectively encouraging conformity and discouraging or even punishing nonconformity.