Conformity and Obedience

- What is Conformity and Obedience?
- When do we Conform?
- Why do we Conform?
- Who Conforms?
- Being Different
Conformity

- **Conformity**: change in behavior or belief as a result of real or imagined group pressure

- **Fads**: [http://www.crazyfads.com/](http://www.crazyfads.com/)

- **Compliance**: publicly conforming to something you disagree with

- **Acceptance**: sincere conformity as a result of an internal change

- **Obedience**: following the commands of an authority figure
Classic Research in Conformity

- Sherif’s Norm Formation – used the autokinetic effect to study norm development
- Social Contagions - we are susceptible to the suggestions of others
  - Mass Hysteria and Delusions
  - Chameleon Effect
  - Referee Bias
  - Copycat Effect

![Graph showing estimated movement in inches over time for different individuals and groups.](image)
Classic Research in Conformity - Asch

- Asch's Line Studies - examined influence of group pressure and conformity

Standard lines

Comparison lines

1
2
3
Classic Research in Conformity - Asch

![Bar Chart]

- Average conformity
- Conformed every time
- # complying at least once
Milgram’s “Infamous” Obedience Experiments

- Milgram’s Obedience Studies – examined influence of authority on obedience

![Diagram of control panel.](image)
Milgram’s “Infamous” Obedience Experiments

The majority of subjects continued to obey to the end.
Milgram’s “Infamous” Obedience Experiments

What Breeds Obedience?

- Emotional Distance – conformity was high when “learners” were in different rooms
- Closeness & Legitimacy of Authority – conformity was highest when the “real” researcher was in the room
- Institutional Authority – conformity was higher when Yale funded the study
- Effects of Group Influence – conformity was lowered when confederates objected
Reflections on Conformity Research

- Milgram’s results are compared to worldwide atrocities, (e.g. Abu Ghraib, Bosnia, My Lai)

- Psychological Principles:
  - Behavior and Attitudes – incremental steps lead to large acts of evil
  - The Power of the Situation- underestimate conformity pressures
  - Fundamental Attribution Error – we blame the “teachers” and underestimate the situation
When Do We Conform?

- **Which Situations Trigger Conformity?**
  - **Group Size** – conformity increases with group size
When Do We Conform?

- **Unanimity** – one dissenting vote decreases conformity
- **Cohesion** – tightly-knit groups have more influence on members than less cohesive ones
- **Status** – high status members have more influence than low status or stigmatized members
- **Public response** – responding publicly increases conformity
- **Prior Commitment** – prior commitments decrease conformity
Why Do We Conform?

- **Normative Influence** – conforming to gain acceptance and avoid rejection
- **Informational Influence** – conforming as a result of accepting evidence about reality
Who Conforms?

- Individual differences affect rates of conformity
  - Birth Order?
  - Gender – Small effects have shown that women conform slightly more than men
  - Personality – personality effects are strongest in “weak” or ambiguous social situations
  - Culture – collectivists cultures tend to conform more
  - Social Roles – situational norms can influence conformity
Resisting Social Pressures

■ The Power of the Person
  □ Reactance – motivation to protect or restore personal **freedom**
  □ Asserting Uniqueness – in western culture we feel better when we are slightly unique

■ Names
  □ Jason, Jayson, Jaicen – Alicia, Aleesha, Allisha