

# From conformity to norms - week 9 -

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## Norm formation: the result of social influence

Like attitudes, norms are simplifications

Situation 1 : +/- 50/50

- depolarisation/compromise

Situation 2 : Presence of a majority

- polarisation

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## Norm formation: the result of social influence

### EXPLAINING POLARISATION

Via superficial processing

- The consensus heuristic: Consensus of the majority = truth, reality, good

Via systematic processing

- Attention towards arguments
- Result : Increase of the persuasive power of the majority!

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## Norm formation: the result of social influence

### EXPLAINING POLARISATION

Why does systematic processing favors the majority?

- 1) The arguments of the majority are more numerous  
(imp : novelty and quality of the arguments)
- 2) The (shared) arguments of the majority tend to be discussed and evaluated more often (biased discussion)

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## Norm formation: the result of social influence

### EXPLAINING POLARISATION

Why does systematic processing favors the majority?

- 3) The (repeated) arguments of the majority seem more valid
- 4) The arguments of the majority seem better presented.
  - a) primacy effect
  - b) confidence of the speakers (by validation)

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## The pressure to conform

The consensus: At what price?

- Unreliable consensus  
(manipulated, biased info, presence of a mindguard,...)
- Contamination  
(interdependance of the opinions, shared biases,...)
- Public conformity  
(pluralistic ignorance because of fear, exhaustion or the desire to please)

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## Groupthink

When the desire to achieve consensus interferes with decision making.

### CAUSES & CONSEQUENCES

- 1) High internal cohesion / Identification to the group
- 2) Work under pressure / Consensus IS the goal
- 3) Procedures which biases information processing
- 4) Overestimation of the group's efficiency and abilities

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## Groupthink

### SOLUTIONS

Encourage dissension  
Include people from the outside  
Avoid public votes, reduce the role of the leader

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## Minority influence

### OFFERING AN ALTERNATE CONSENSUS

High internal consensus  
Consistency/Stability of the consensus

Exposure to dissension increases resistance to pressure to conform.

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## Minority influence

### EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN SIMILARITY & DIFFERENCE

Disagreement coming from the inside is more efficient

Consequently: agree first and then disagree

### PROMOTION OF SYSTEMATIC PROCESSING

Mostly indirect influence

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## How do norms affect behaviour?

### Importance of accessibility (by context, direct recall,...)

- Paper ad on the windshield : Pro-environment activation (10%) vs not (25%)
- Presence of a normative context (clean vs dirty) and activation by a confederate throwing something on the ground

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## Why do norms work?

- 1) Social pressure (reinforcement and punishment)
  - Marginalisation and removal of social support
  - The Big brother problem and public acceptance
- 2) Internalisation
  - Identification to the group
  - Socialisation
- 3) Consensus and support
  - Presence of the others

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## Why do norms work?

### 4) Frequent activation

- See Social identity

### 5) Useful as an action heuristic

- Simplifies and accelerate decision making

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## Deindividuation

### Examples

#### The first explanation

The crowds increase anonymity, reduce self-awareness and reduce the effects of norms

- ⦿ Deindividuation would thus increase the tendency towards antisocial behaviours
- ⦿ Metaphor of romantic origin : rationality vs instinct

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## Deindividuation

#### A contemporary alternative

Crowds (and anonymity) increase the accessibility of the social identity and thus, of the norms of the group.

- ⦿ Deindividuation would thus increase the behaviours typical of the group

#### Johnson & Downing (1979)

Learning by electric punishment

Nurse vs KKK, anonymity or not

Which factors influence the level of shock?

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## The norm of social reciprocity

Rare exceptions : children, elderly, sick

### Returning favors

The effect of free offers (samples, 1-day trials, free class,...)

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## The norm of social reciprocity

### Returning concessions

The door-in-the-face technique

Initial request followed by a concession

Cialdini et al. (1975)

A) Request to accompany a group of teenage delinquents at the zoo for 2 hours (17%)

B) Request to be a counselor to juvenile delinquents for 2 years (0%) followed by request A (51%)

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## The norm of social reciprocity

### Returning concessions

The door-in-the-face technique

Three necessary conditions :

- 1) First request is not exaggerated
- 2) Possibility of a compromise through a concession
- 3) Second request related to the first and coming from the same person

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## The norm of social reciprocity

### Returning a concession

The that's-not-all technique

High price followed by a spontaneous reduction

Ex : Brownies at 1,25\$ - 0,25\$ vs 1,00\$

The top-of-the-line technique

Trying to sell the most expensive product and going down

Ex : Pool tables

Starting from the less expensive (550\$)

Starting from the most expensive (1000\$)

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## The norm of social commitment

### Moriarty (1975)

1) At the beach:

- request to watch a radio vs asking the time

2) Somebody steals the radio

3) Intervention : 95% vs 20%

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## The norm of social commitment

### The Low ball technique

A commitment is requested and then the cost of the commitment is increased

Ex : Request to participate to a social psychology experiment

A) The experiment begins at 7am (31%)

B) Confirmation of the commitment followed by info about the time (56%)

Ex 2 : Agreement about the price of a car followed by an increase of the price by the boss (or hidden costs)

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## The norm of social commitment

Why is the commitment maintained?

- 1) Feeling of social obligation
- 2) To maintain a positive self-image
- 3) Pro-commitment reinterpretation (benefits, self-appropriation,...)

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## Resisting norms!

### 1) Reactance

People often react/rebel when they feel that their sense of freedom is threatened

Ex: Avoiding reactance in children

The politics of reactance: Bush and the Patriotic act

### 2) Systematic processing

Is it possible? Capacity, motivation and anxiety

- Is the norm used adequately?
- What is my relation to the other?
- What do others think of that?

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## Resisting norms!

### 3) Breaking the consensus to allow dissension

Exposition to dissension decreases pressure to conform

### 4) Proposing an alternate norm/consensus

Creating a norm of resistance

Consensus and identification to the group

Internal consensus needs to be high and constant

Disagreement from the inside is more efficient

- You thus have to be accepted by the group before disagreeing. Why?

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