CONFORMITY AND OBEDIENCE
CONFORMITY

When people are free to do as they please,
they usually imitate each other.

www.despair.com
CONFORMITY = GROUP INFLUENCE

CONFORMITY OCCURS WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL’S THOUGHTS OR ACTIONS ARE AFFECTED BY OTHER PEOPLE.

CONFORMITY TAKES MANY FORMS AND CAN BE SEEN IN:
- Socialization
- Peer Pressure
- Obedience
- Leadership
- Persuasion
- Sales
- Marketing
"Individuality is fine, as long as everyone does it together."

Major Frank Burns
M*A*S*H
Three broad varieties of CONFORMITY:

1) **COMPLIANCE:**
   public conformity while keeping one’s own private beliefs

2) **IDENTIFICATION:**
   conforming to someone who is liked and respected, such as a celebrity or favorite uncle or someone perceived as an authority

3) **INTERNALIZATION (ACCEPTANCE):**
   acceptance of the belief or behavior and conforming both publicly and privately
CONFORMITY:

HOW DO STANDING OVATIONS OCCUR?

HOW DO STANDING OVATIONS STOP/END?
SOLOMON ASCH CONFORMITY STUDY
76% OF THOSE TESTED WENT ALONG WITH (CONFORMED TO) THE INCORRECT ANSWER
INFLUENCES ON CONFORMITY IN ASCH STUDY

GROUP SIZE:
CONFORMITY INCREASES WITH GROUP SIZE UP TO FOUR PERSONS IN THE GROUP, AND THEN LEVELS OFF

AWARENESS OF GROUP NORMS:
CONFORMITY INCREASES WHEN THE NORM IS “ACTIVATED” OR BROUGHT TO THE PERSON’S ATTENTION

AN ALLY IN DISSENT:
THE PRESENCE OF A SINGLE CONFEDERATE WHO DISAGREES WITH THE MAJORITY REDUCES CONFORMITY
WORKING WITH A PARTNER, COME TO CONSENSUS ABOUT ONE SAD CONCLUSION AND ONE HOPEFUL CONCLUSION YOU CAN REACH ABOUT CONFORMITY AS A RESULT OF ASCH’S EXPERIMENTS

BAD NEWS:
WHEN MAKING THE CORRECT CHOICE INVOLVES GOING IT ALONE AND DEFYING THE MAJORITY AROUND US, FEW PEOPLE WILL CHOOSE TO GO IT ALONE AND WILL INSTEAD CHOOSE TO BE WRONG WITH THE GROUP

GOOD NEWS:
WHEN EVEN ONE OTHER PERSON (WHETHER A CONFEDERATE OR ANOTHER SUBJECT) GIVES THE CORRECT ANSWER (EVEN WHEN ALL THE REST OF THE CONFEDERATES ARE GIVING INCORRECT ANSWERS), CONFORMITY RATES DECREASE SIGNIFICANTLY

IN OTHER WORDS, THE SUBJECT IS MUCH LESS LIKELY TO GO ALONG WITH THE GROUP AND GIVE AN INCORRECT ANSWER WHEN THERE IS JUST ONE OTHER PERSON IN THE ROOM WHO IS ALSO DISAGREEING WITH THE REST OF THE GROUP.
SOLOMON ASCH LINE CONFORMITY EXPERIMENT
STANLEY MILGRAM
OBEDIENCE
STUDY
HOW DO YOU THINK PEOPLE WILL RESPOND TO THIS SITUATION?

• BEFORE HE CARRIED OUT HIS EXPERIMENT, MILGRAM ASKED SEVERAL PSYCHIATRISTS TO PREDICT HOW MANY SUBJECTS WOULD COMPLY WITH THE EXPERIMENT & SHOCK THE LEARNERS.

• CONFER WITH YOUR PARTNER. WHAT PERCENTAGE DO YOU THINK THESE EXPERTS ESTIMATED WOULD GO ALL THE WAY?

• THEY PREDICTED THAT ONLY 1% WOULD GO TO THE HIGHEST VOLTAGE.

• CONFER WITH YOUR GROUP. WHAT PERCENTAGE DO YOU ESTIMATE WOULD BE WILLING TO DELIVER FATAL SHOCKS?
RESULTS FROM MILGRIM EXPERIMENT

65% OF SUBJECTS ADMINISTERED THE MAXIMUM VOLTAGE (FATAL SHOCK)
ONE OF MILGRIM’S CONCLUSIONS:

“HUMAN NATURE CANNOT BE COUNTED ON TO INSULATE MAN FROM BRUTALITY AT THE HANDS OF HIS FELLOW MAN WHEN ORDERS COME FROM WHAT IS PERCEIVED AS A LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY.”

DO YOU AGREE?
STANLEY MILGRAM OBEDIENCE STUDY
The next slide surveys some of the bleaker moments of modern human history. Some of these may be upsetting or unsettling. Feel free to put your head down and listen if you don’t want to see these images.
Jim Jones – Guyana – 900+ killed

My Lai Massacre – Vietnam – 347 unarmed civilians

Lynching – Marion, Ind. 1960 – 4,700 between 1892 and 1951

Estimated # of Jews Murdered in Europe
- Poland: 2.8 million
- USSR: 1.5 million
- Romania: 850,000
- Hungary: 404,000
- Czech: 260,000

Total 6 million

Shoes – Holocaust Museum
WHAT ABOUT TODAY?

Abu Ghraib, Iraq - 2004
WHO IS TO BLAME?

“A FEW BAD APPLES...”

SOMETIMES EVIL IS THE RESULT OF BAD APPLES: JEFFREY DAHMER, JACK THE RIPPER, ETC

BUT MANY TIMES IT’S NOT...
THE NOTION THAT THE DIVISION BETWEEN GOOD PEOPLE AND BAD PEOPLE ARE SEPARATED BY SOME IMPERMEABLE BARRIER IS AN ILLUSION.

“The line between good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being.”

--Alexandre Solzenitsyn, author and survivor of Stalin’s gulag
Definition of Evil

- Working with your partner, try to come up with a definition of evil.

- Social Psychologists such as Irving Sarnoff and Phillip Zimbardo have defined evil:
  
  “Evil is knowing better and doing worse.”
Unsettling Reality

• How well do you really know yourself?

• How sure are you of what you would or would not do in new situations?

• How well do you really know anyone else across all the many situations in which they play different roles – of which you are not aware?
STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT

Images from the Stanford experiment
(with thanks to Philip Zimbardo)
Philip Zimbardo:
Stanford Prison Experiment

A SIMULATION STUDY OF THE PSYCHOLOGY OF IMPRISONMENT CONDUCTED AT STANFORD UNIVERSITY

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU PUT GOOD PEOPLE IN AN EVIL PLACE?

DOES HUMANITY WIN OVER EVIL, OR DOES EVIL TRIUMPH?

PRISONERS AND GUARDS RAPIDLY ADAPTED TO THEIR ROLES, STEPPING BEYOND THE BOUNDARIES OF WHAT HAD BEEN PREDICTED AND LEADING TO DANGEROUS AND PSYCHOLOGICALLY DAMAGING SITUATIONS.

ZIMBARDO CONCLUDED THAT EVERYONE INCLUDING HIMSELF HAD BECOME TOO ABSORBED IN THEIR ROLES AND TERMINATED THE EXPERIMENT AFTER SIX DAYS.
How is it that “good people” can do evil things?

• **Internal:** Certain character defects or sadistic personalities led to the behavior. “The Bad Apples”

• **Situational:** Good men and women corrupted by the behavioral context, by powerful **situational forces**. “The Bad Barrel”

• So what’s a better question than “Who is to blame?”
When we explore systematic episodes of evil such as the Holocaust, what might be a better question than “Who is to Blame?”

Confer with your partner

What is to blame?
MAJOR DETERMINANTS OF CONFORMITY

THE MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTING FACTORS FOR CONFORMITY:

1. NOT DIRECTLY RESPONSIBLE (“MERELY” BYSTANDER – KITTY GENOVESE)
2. PEER PRESSURE TO CONTINUE
3. CLEAR AUTHORITY FIGURE – “LEARNED SUBMISSION”

THE MOST IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTING FACTORS FOR REBELLION:

1. ABSENCE OF CLEAR AUTHORITY FIGURE
2. DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ACTION
3. AT LEAST ONE ALLY

ONE FACTOR THAT WAS/IS IRRELEVANT THAT MAY SURPRISE YOU:

1. GENDER MAKES NO DIFFERENCE
WHAT’S THE ANTIDOTE?

• AWARENESS OF THE “BANALITY OF EVIL”: THE ORDINARINESS OF THOSE WHO ENGAGE IN EVIL DEEDS

• AWARENESS OF JUST HOW POWERFUL SITUATIONAL FORCES ARE IN REGARD TO BEHAVIOR

• AWARENESS OF THE FACT THAT EVEN ONE ALLY CAN DRAMATICALLY CHANGE THE OUTCOME

• RESISTANCE TO THE URGE TO DO NOTHING, TO NOT ACT
HEROES

- A HERO IS SOMEONE WHO IS COURAGEOUS, WHO SHOWS COURAGE, WHO DOES THE THING THAT NO ONE ELSE WILL

- HEROES ARE ORDINARY PEOPLE WHOSE SOCIAL ACTION IS EXTRAORDINARY

- WHO ACT WHEN OTHERS ARE PASSIVE

- WHO GIVE UP EGOCENTRISM FOR SOCIOCENTRISM

- EXAMPLE: Wesley Autry, NYC Subway, 2007