**Social Influence**

We are all influenced by those around us in a variety of ways. Research studies on conformity and obedience have informed us on such influences.

**Conformity**is defined asthe adjustment of behavior or thinking to coincide with others. This often occurs as a result of peer pressure. Examples of conformity include: Reacting to an incident in a similar way as the others around you. Know **Solomon Aschs** research on conformity and the conditions that strengthen conformity.

**Reasons for conformity:**

1. **Normative Social Influence**Person conforms because they want to gain social approval/acceptance. (NORM following the social norm)  
2. **Informational Social Influence**Person conforms because they accept others judgment on reality. (INFO accepting info/facts about reality)

**Stanley Milligrams Obedience Study**Participants act as teachers who deliver electrical shocks to "students" that answer incorrectly. The magnitude of voltage increase as the number of questions answered incorrectly increase. Even though screaming sounds of pain were heard from the "students", 63% of the participants delivered right up to the last 450-volts (which knowingly caused great pain). The experiment showed that obedience was highest when: 1.the order giver has high authority; 2.the victim was far away or unseen and 3. No one was seen disobeying. (Everyone appeared to comply).

**Types of group influence:**

1.**Social Facilitation**Improved performance on well learned tasks in the presence of others (audience).    
2. **Social Loafing**There isdiminished effort when working in a group towards a common goal. (When other members slack off)    
3. **Deindividuation**The loss of self- restraint when one is part of a large group. Especially when depersonalized e.g. wearing a mask or a Klu Klux Klan style hood.

**The effects of group interaction:**

1. **Group Polarization**Pre-existing attitudes become enhanced when discussed with in a group. I.e. when people who are upset by their administration talk together, they feel their actions are more justified and they become even more discontent.    
2. **Group Think**Where people in group discussions tend to agree with whatever is being proposed in order to maintain harmony. Alternative views are suppressed even though they are better than the presented one. Can lead to dangerous over cites as was the case in the 1985 Challenger mission (see text)

**Other powers of influence:**

1. **Minority influence- (**E.g. Rosa Parkss actions that ignited the civil rightsmovement.) A minority that consistently holds its position tends to be more successful in swaying a majority than is a minority that is not cohesive.   
2. **Culture**Passed on behaviors, ideas, and attitudes shared by many people.   
3. **Personal Space**The "zone" we like to maintain around our bodies. Our area of personal space is very dependent on the culture from which we come.  North American and British people tend to prefer greater personal space than do Arab and French people for example.  
4. **Gender Roles**Expected behaviors from males and females in a culture. These behaviors are modeled within the community and are obviously influenced by one's gender.  Gender roles vary over time as well as across cultures.    
5. **Self-fulfilling Prophecy** - This is the situation that occurs when someone's belief about others leads them to act in a way that induces the others to appear to confirm the belief.  For instance, if you have heard awful things about a fellow student you have just met, you may treat them in a negative way that ultimately causes them to react negatively to you, thus affirming your feelings.