Mass Media and Interpersonal Communication

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An Interesting Comparison: Difference between German and Chinese

Why are so many differences between the two groups?
**primary group**

A primary group is a typically small social group whose members share close, personal, enduring relationships. These groups are marked by members' concern for one another, shared activities and culture, and long periods of time spent together. Examples include family, childhood friends, and highly influential social groups (team sports groups, academic groups, etc...).

**reference group**

A reference group is a sociological concept referring to a group to which another group is compared. Reference groups are used in order to evaluate and determine the nature of a given individual or other group's characteristics and sociological attributes. Reference groups provide the benchmarks and contrast needed for comparison and evaluation of group and personal characteristics.

**casual group**

People in a casual group interact on a less personal level than in a primary group, and their relationships are temporary rather than long lasting. Since casual groups are established to perform functions, people’s roles are more interchangeable.
Social Norms

Of interest to most social scientists across disciplines, social norms are group-held beliefs about how members should behave in a given context. Sociologists describe norms as laws that govern society’s behaviors, while psychologists have adopted a more general definition, recognizing smaller group units, like a team or an office, may also endorse norms separate or in addition to cultural or societal expectations. The psychological definition emphasizes social norms' behavioral component, stating norms have two dimensions: how much behavior is exhibited and how much the group approves of that behavior.
The studies bring to the surface two important aspects of those social effects. First, group interactions can shape the responses of the participants. Second — and possibly more importantly — the shaping of those responses endures, and the human social norms’ formating as well.
Muzaffer Sherif——Social Norms

- Sherif's Autokinetic Light Effect

See the Video:
Solomon Asch—Group Pressure

- **Aim**
  The aim of these studies was to investigate conformity in a group situation.

- **Method**
  Laboratory experiment

**ASCH, S.E.** Studies of independence and conformity: a minority of one against a unanimous majority. Psychological Monographs, 1956, 70.
The experimenter arrives and tells you that the study in which you are about to participate concerns people's visual judgments. She places two cards before you. The card on the left contains one vertical line. The card on the right displays three lines of varying length. The experimenter asks all of you, one at a time, to choose which of the three lines on the right card matches the length of the line on the left card. See the video of the Experiment.
Solomon Asch——Group Pressure

- **Results:** Asch found that the (genuine) participants conformed on 32% of the trials and only 26% of people never conformed.
- **Conclusions:** Even in an unambiguous (obvious) situation there is a strong group pressure to conform, especially if there is a unanimous (everyone else saying the same thing) majority.
- **Evaluation:** As with the Sherif experiment, it lacks ecological validity meaning it is not the sort of thing we would be doing on a day-to-day basis if ever. There is also the problem that he only used male and young (students) people, meaning that it is not possible to generalise the results to everyone as only a thin slice of society was tested.
- **Academy Schools**
There are 12 different sets of cards.

The results for 123 subjects showed 76 percent of them yielding to the group pressure and giving the wrong answer at least once.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error Rate</th>
<th>Number of Subjects</th>
<th>Percentage of Subjects</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 Errors</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1–7 Errors</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8–12 Errors</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>123</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Fallacy, Cults, Religion and Group Pressure
Cults are an example in our society of groups exerting a particularly strong influence. A cult is a small group of people devoted to a person, idea, or movement. Cults are often built around a set of nonmainstream religious beliefs. Cults have their own beliefs and standards of behavior (group norms) and teach them to new members, often through a lengthy indoctrination. Cults typically weaken an individual member by making him or her dependent on the group for the solution of problems. Many cults share the unorthodox belief that the end of the world is coming and that their group will be the only one to survive. Some cults, such as the Heaven's Gate group that committed mass suicide in California in 1997, keep in touch with members through a website.

Sources: Melton (1986); Kornblum (1997).
How Norms Are Developed

- Murnighan (1985) focused on how the process are formed.

1. New groups are uncertain about the appropriate behavior. They look to similar, previously experienced situations for scripts to serve as guidelines. If not appropriate:

2. The group members interact, their shared experiences form the basis for expectations about future interactions.

3. Challenges to evolving norms may lead non-challengers to revise their interpretations or lead them to attempt to persuade the group to accept their interpretations.

4. Once a norm has formed, any further attempts to alter the behavior controlled by the norm will be met with sanctions.

See the Video of Bali Tempo Deoleo 1932.
Group dynamics is the study of groups, and also a general term for group processes. Relevant to the fields of psychology, sociology, and communication studies, a group is two or more individuals who are connected to each other by social relationships. Because they interact and influence each other, groups develop a number of dynamic processes that separate them from a random collection of individuals. These processes include norms, roles, relations, development, need to belong, social influence, and effects on behavior. The field of group dynamics is primarily concerned with small group behavior. Groups may be classified as aggregate, primary, secondary and category groups.

In organizational development (OD), or group dynamics, the phrase "group process" refers to the understanding of the behaviour of people in groups, such as task groups, that are trying to solve a problem or make a decision. An individual with expertise in group process, such as a trained facilitator, can assist a group in accomplishing its objective by diagnosing how well the group is functioning as a problem-solving or decision-making entity and intervening to alter the group's operating behaviour.
Because people gather in groups for reasons other than task accomplishment, group process occurs in other types of groups such as personal growth groups (e.g. encounter groups, study groups, prayer groups). In such cases, an individual with expertise in group process can be helpful in the role of facilitator.

Well researched but rarely mentioned by professional group workers, is the social status of people within the group (i.e., senior or junior). The group leader (or facilitator) will usually have a strong influence on the group due to his or her role of shaping the group's outcomes. This influence will also be affected by the leader's sex, race, relative age, income, appearance, and personality, as well as organizational structures and many other factors.
Those study showed a strong tendency for people to vote the same way as the members of their primary groups. The family is one of the most important of those primary groups. The influence of the family is indicated by the fact that 75 percent of the first voters in the Elmira study voted the same way their father did.
Table 9.2  Respondents Who Intended to Vote Republican and the Vote Intentions of Their Three Closest Friends

| Vote Intentions of Their Three Closest Friends | Republican | Republican | Republican | Republican
|------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Respondents Who Intended to Vote Republican (%) | 88        | 74        | 49        | 15


Table 9.3  Respondents Who Intended to Vote Republican and the Vote Intentions of Their Three Closest Co-Workers

| Vote Intentions of Their Three Closest Co-Workers | Republican | Republican | Republican | Republican
|------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Respondents Who Intended to Vote Republican (%) | 86        | 75        | 53        | 19

Table 9.4  Respondents Who Voted Republican, Tabulated by Religious Affiliation and Socioeconomic Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>High Status</th>
<th></th>
<th>Middle Status</th>
<th></th>
<th>Low Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>Catholic</td>
<td>Protestant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents Who Voted Republican (%)</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Social Identification Model

- Social identification model proposes that a social group be defined as two or more individuals who share a common social identification or perceive themselves to be members of the same social category. Group membership is seen primarily as a cognitive process, often resulting from attempts of the person to answer the question, ”WHO AM I?” Rather on emotional responses “Do I Like Those People?”.
- Individuals take these category memberships seriously because they are related to their concept of who they are.
- Public Opinion and the Model. Find themselves.
Social Identification Model

- Social Identification Model;
- Group Structure & Group Dynamics;
- Group Influence;
- Audience Segmentation.

Refer to the Book
Groups As Instruments of Change

- Health Communication and Stop-smoking Group. (Three Group)
Box 9.2 Using Norms in a Campaign to Prevent Smoking

A health communication team at the University of Vermont designed a mass media campaign aimed at preventing adolescent girls from starting to smoke cigarettes (Worden, Flynn, Solomon, Secker-Walker, Badger, and Carpenter, 1996). The media campaign was designed to supplement antismoking programs in the public schools.

One aspect of the campaign was a deliberate attempt to use the power of norms. Producers of the television spots for the campaign were told to ensure that a nonsmoking norm was transmitted by having smokers portrayed in the minority and nonsmokers highlighted as the more prominent and attractive majority.

Berelson excelled at summarizing important scientific work, pointing out missing pieces, and spelling out implications. He had a well-developed sense of what research findings would make a practical difference, and his influential syntheses shaped the knowledge-base and the direction of field programs. His contributions in this mode include "Beyond Family Planning" (1969); "The Great Debate on Population Policy: An Instructive Entertainment" (1975); "The Record of Family Planning Programs" (1976); "Paths to Fertility Reduction: The Policy Cube" (1977); and "The Condition of Fertility Decline in Developing Countries, 1965–75" (1978). Some 14 of his articles and essays were posthumously published in a volume edited by John A. Ross and W. Parker Mauldin (1988). That volume also includes Berelson's full bibliography. His writings on population reflect the conviction that population growth was "among the great problems on the world agenda," because "rapid population growth retards social and economic development." From these premises he drew the conclusion that "everything that can properly be done to lower population growth rates should be done" (Ross and Mauldin, 1988, p. 42).
Mass Media & Interpersonal Communication
Mass Media & Interpersonal Communication

- Mass Media & Presidential Election;
  1. Opinion Leaders
  2. Two-step Flow of Communication
Groups and Political Attitudes

- 1940 Election, Roosevelt vs Willkie Erie County, Ohio;
- 1948 Election, Truman vs Dewey, Elmira, New York State.

Those study showed a strong tendency for people to vote the same way as the members of their primary groups. The family is one of the most important of those primary groups. The influence of the family is indicated by the fact that 75 percent of the first voters in the Elmira study voted the same way their father did.

`Opinion Leader, Two Step Flow of Communication.`
Evidence for the Law of the Few was first produced in a 1940 landmark study on media influence conducted by Columbia University. The research found, contrary to what might be expected, that mass media messages do not directly influence the mass market but instead influence a small minority of individuals who then influence their peers through word-of-mouth. The researchers coined a new term for these hubs of word of mouth mediating mass media messages ‘opinion leaders’, proposing a new ‘two-step flow model’ of media influence to replace the discredited ‘magic bullet’ or ‘hypodermic needle’ model of direct media influence.
Conclusions after 1940 Voting Study

1. Personal influence was both more frequent and more effective than of the mass media, not only in politics but also in marketing, fashion and movie attendance. Drug diffusion for instance, doctors most integrated in the medical community were the ones most likely to be early adopters of the innovation.

2. Interpersonal influence in primary groups is effective in maintaining a high degree of homogeneity of opinions and actions within a group.

3. In the decision-making process, different media play different roles.
Factors Differentiate Leaders from Others

1. Personification of values (Who one is)
   价值观的人格化体现（其人为谁）

2. Competence (What one know)
   能力（其人的知识）

3. Strategic social location (whom one knows)
   可利用的社会位置（其人所知的人）
1. The impact of personal influence in the decision-making process, which "led the researchers to conclude that personal contacts appear to have been more frequent and more effective than mass media in determining voting decisions".

2. The flow of personal influence was determined by the researchers to be "activated by certain individuals who were to be found on every level of society and, presumably, were very much like the people whom they influenced".

3. The relationship between the mass media and opinion leaders was determined by the researchers to be a two-step flow of communication. "Ideas often flow from radio and print to opinion leaders [who were more exposed to the mass media] and from them to the less active sections of the population".
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New Conclusion

- Diffusion of Communication
- Limited Effect of Media Compared with Bullet Theory
Critics of Opinion Leaders

1. Many studies show that major news stories are spread directly by the mass media to a far greater extent than by personal sources.
2. Findings show that opinions on public affairs are reciprocal or that often there is “opinion sharing rather than opinion giving”.
3. The definition of opinion leader and non-opinion leader is unclear.
4. Empirical definition of mass media vary.
5. Opinion leader can be active or passive.
6. The original model is limited to two steps, whereas the process may involve more or even fewer.
Mass Media & Interpersonal Communication

Opinion Leaders

For Females:

\[ y = 0.9484x + 26.491 \]

For Males:

\[ y = 1.1842x + 9.6453 \]
The Truth about Opinion Leaders

‘Simply by finding and reaching those few special people who hold so much social power, we can shape the course of social epidemics... Look at the world around you... With the slightest push – in the right place – it can be tipped the Tipping Point.
Despite a number of criticisms by subsequent researchers, The People's Choice study is considered one of the most prominent studies in mass communication research due to its comparison between the mass media and personal flow of information and influence. Criticisms are directed at the oversimplification of the two-step flow of communication, thus the underestimation of the direct influence of the media. The process of influence is said to be more complex than a single group of opinion leaders listening to the mass media, then feeding their opinions to a group of passive followers. Instead, people who influence others are themselves influenced by others in the same topic area, resulting in an exchange. Opinion leaders are, thereby, both a disseminator and recipient of influence. With this in mind, a more accurate portrayal of the communication flow would be a multi-step process, rather than simply a two-step process.
The innovator theory relates to the spread of innovation and was put forward in 1962 by Stanford University Professor Everett M. Rogers in his book "Diffusion of Innovations" (released under a different title in Japan). Rogers classifies consumer attitudes towards purchasing products into five categories according to how quick consumers are to purchase new products:

1. innovators (2.5%), 2. opinion leaders or early adapters (13.5%), 3. early majority (34%), 4. late majority (34%), and 5. laggards or late adapters (16%).
The End of This Chapter