Social Influences on Behavior Change

Regina Schreiber
University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, rschreib@uark.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.uark.edu/cfhndfend

Part of the Human and Clinical Nutrition Commons

Citation
SOCIAL INFLUENCES ON BEHAVIOR CHANGE

By: Regina Schreiber
WHAT IS SOCIAL INFLUENCE? AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

• A process where a person’s attitudes, opinions, beliefs, or behavior are altered or controlled by some form of social communication
  
  • **Conformity** - goal is group acceptance or sense of belongingness
    
    • **Normative Conformity** - embrace or accept other people’s beliefs to fit in
      
      Example: Changing dietary or exercise habits to be like other people
  
  • **Compliance** - changing behavior but still internally disagreeing
    
    Examples: Eating certain foods considered “healthy” just because that’s what other people are say you “should” do, but not actually believing in the value of it for you personally
MOVING FROM COMPLIANCE TO ACCEPTANCE

• First we may exercise because peers/family say we “SHOULD” (conformity or compliance) BUT over time we may exercise because we believe in the health benefits (acceptance)

• Behavior reflects attitudes = ACCEPTANCE 😊
WHY IS MOVING FROM COMPLIANCE TO ACCEPTANCE IMPORTANT FOR BEHAVIOR CHANGE?

There are three main components that influence our intention to engage in a behavior:

| Our own attitudes towards the behavior | Perceived social pressures to engage in the behavior | Perceived control we have over actually doing the dang thing! |

Positive attitudes + favorable social norms = More perceived control

Higher Perceived control → Greater Intention to Change Behavior!
SOCIAL INFLUENCE IN GOAL SETTING

• Other people can help us achieve independent goals we set for ourselves
  • Accountability
  • Help us plan
  • Encouragement

• We might make joint goals with other people
  • Working towards goals with another person can increase motivation
  • Need to be careful to make sure that one person is not undermining the joint goal pursuit or else it may not be as beneficial!

• Even independent goals can be socially influenced → people perform better on tasks after having positive social interactions with others
SOCIAL INFLUENCES: CO-ACTION EFFECTS, WHAT’S THAT?

• People perform better on tasks when others are present and engaging in the same task
  • Goes along with setting goals with other people

Examples: When exercising, people may have a better workout if others are there doing it with them

Research shows that we will eat more food when there are others present who are also eating

If we put ourselves around others who are eating healthier foods, we might choose to eat more healthy foods too!
We may first change behavior to fit in, but then internalize that behavior change and accept it for ourselves.

Positive attitudes about behavior + positive social pressures increase the control we believe we have over our behavior which increases our intention to do the behavior.

Setting goals with others or allowing others to help us achieve our own goals can increase our motivation.

Engaging in a behavior that others are doing at the same time can improve our performance.

MAIN POINTS ON SOCIAL INFLUENCE
QUESTIONS???