Understanding Conformity

Defining Conformity

- Adapting to social norms from exposure to information or the social pressure of others

- Types of Social Influence

  - Informative: Other's input is a source of potentially valuable information

  - Normative: Conform to majority to fit in or not stand out, influenced by peer pressure. Public acceptance, not internalization of beliefs

Factors Affecting Conformity: Personality

- A person's personality can be a good indicator as to whether they will conform or not
  - Self-Esteem Levels of self-esteem can determine whether or not an individual will conform
    - Ex. People with low self esteem will sometimes act out to draw attention to themselves, or conform to fit in
  - Authoritarianism: How assertive someone is will determine whether they conform or now
    - Ex. Someone who is highly authoritarian will try to lead trends rather than follow
  - Individuality: Internal drive to express personal differences

Factors Affecting Conformity: Culture

- Some cultures allow, or even encourage, individual differences, but mostly encourage staying within norms of "acceptable" behavior
  - Ex. Western Culture

- Some cultures (especially culturally homogeneous) encourage cultural conformity, and some even go so far as punishing behavior outside norms
  - Ex. Afghan women required to wear Burqas by Taliban

Conformity Case Study: Japan

- "出る釘は打たれる"
  - "The nail that sticks up gets hammered down"

- Japan is a mostly culturally homogenous culture that has very established norms
  - Theory that reason why things like Pokémon and Manga are so popular in Japan is that it allows for repressed deviance to break out

Fashion and Trends

- Trends are long lasting patterns of popularity and favor

- Usually popular for long enough periods of time for companies to take advantage of them year after year

  - Ex. Jeans have been a very popular clothing item for a long period of time, Zubaz were only popular for a very short period of time
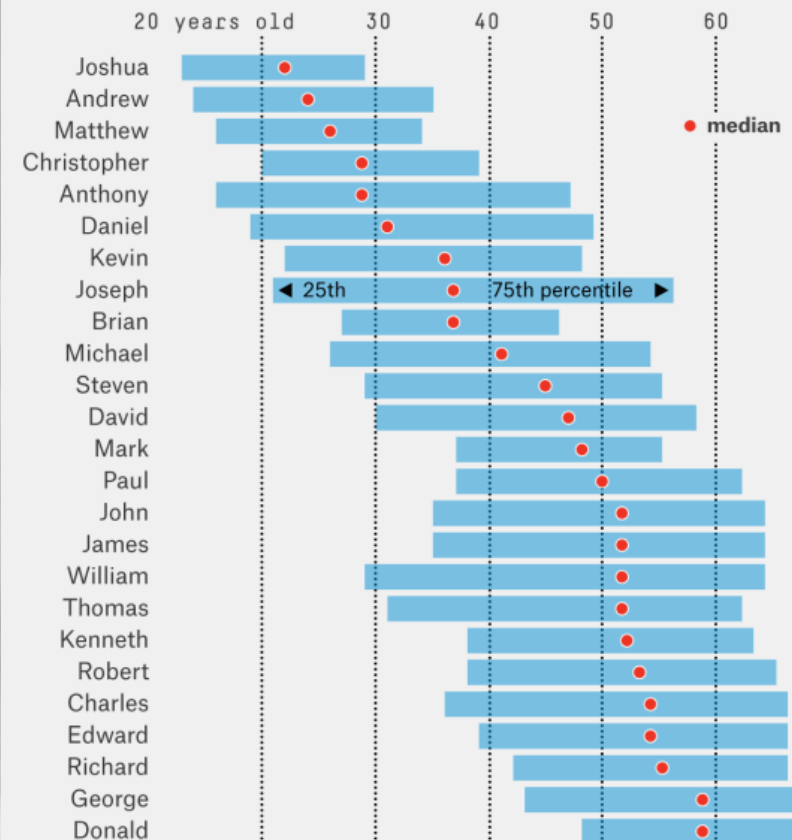
Witnessing Trends – Baby Names

- Baby names depend on popularity
  - Leads to the situation where a person can have an "old" name. Meaning their name use to be popular a while ago, but is not anymore

- Baby naming trends change based on popularity
  - Ex. From 2001 to 2003 the number of babies named Hermione rose from 5 for every million to 50 for every million
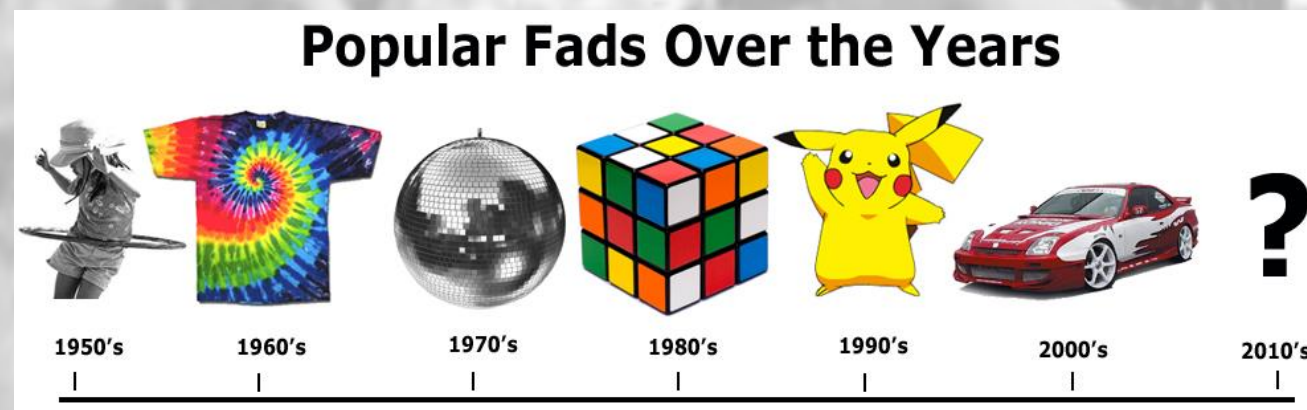
Median Ages For Males With the 25 Most Common Names

Among Americans estimated to be alive as of Jan. 1, 2014

| 20 years old | 30 | 40 | 50 | 60 |

- Joshua
- Andrew
- Matthew
- Christopher
- Anthony
- Daniel
- Kevin
- Joseph
- Brian
- Michael
- Steven
- David
- Mark
- Paul
- John
- James
- William
- Thomas
- Kenneth
- Robert
- Charles
- Edward
- Richard
- George
- Donald

• median

◄ 25th   75th percentile ►

FIVETHIRTYEIGHT

SOURCE: SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Fads

- An intense and widely shared enthusiasm for something, especially one that is short-lived and without basis in the object's qualities; a craze.
  - Ex. The Mannequin Challenge

WHAT IF THE CINNAMON CHALLENGE WAS

STARTED AS A VIRAL CAMPAIGN FROM THE CINNAMON INDUSTRY TO SELL MORE CINNAMON

Popular Fads Over the Years

| 1950's | 1960's | 1970's | 1980's | 1990's | 2000's | 2010's |

Understanding Groupthink

- Theorized by Irving Janis
  - Occurs when a group makes faulty decisions because group pressures lead to a deterioration of "mental efficiency, reality testing, and moral judgment"
- Groups affected by groupthink ignore alternatives and tend to take irrational actions that dehumanize other groups
  - A group is especially vulnerable to groupthink when its members are similar in background, when the group is insulated from outside opinions, and when there are no clear rules for decision making

WHEN ALL THINK ALIKE,
THEN NO ONE IS THINKING
-WALTER LIPPMAN-

Janis' Symptoms of Groupthink

- Illusion of invulnerability –Creates excessive optimism that encourages taking extreme risks.
- Collective rationalization – Members discount warnings and do not reconsider their assumptions.
- Belief in inherent morality – Members believe in the rightness of their cause and therefore ignore the ethical or moral consequences of their decisions.
- Stereotyped views of out-groups – Negative views of "enemy" make effective responses to conflict seem unnecessary.
- Direct pressure on dissenters – Members are under pressure not to express arguments against any of the group's views.
- Self-censorship – Doubts and deviations from the perceived group consensus are not expressed.
- Illusion of unanimity – The majority view and judgments are assumed to be unanimous.
- Self-appointed 'mindguards' – Members protect the group and the leader from information that is problematic or contradictory to the group's cohesiveness, view, and/or decisions.

Groupthink Case Study: Extremes - The Holocaust

- Holocaust was the attempted extermination of "undesirables" by the Nazi Government
  - "Undesirables" included Jews, Roma, Disabled, Homosexuals, Poles, Slavs, intelligentsia
- People have often questioned how it was possible
  - Effective propaganda mechanism by Nazis
  - Non-conformist were dealt with harshly
    - Ex. White Rose Movement in Austria
  - So many people supported it that it just became normalized
   - Opponents in the minority
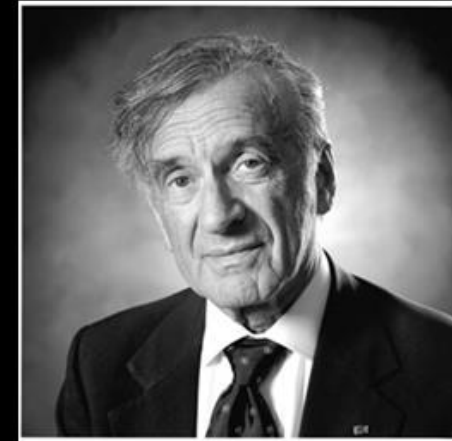
I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.

~ Elie Wiesel, Holocaust Survivor

Measuring Conformity: The Asch Experiment

- The Asch Experiment: Designed to get individuals to follow along with a group, even if they know it is wrong

Click on image to open video dealing with experiment ->
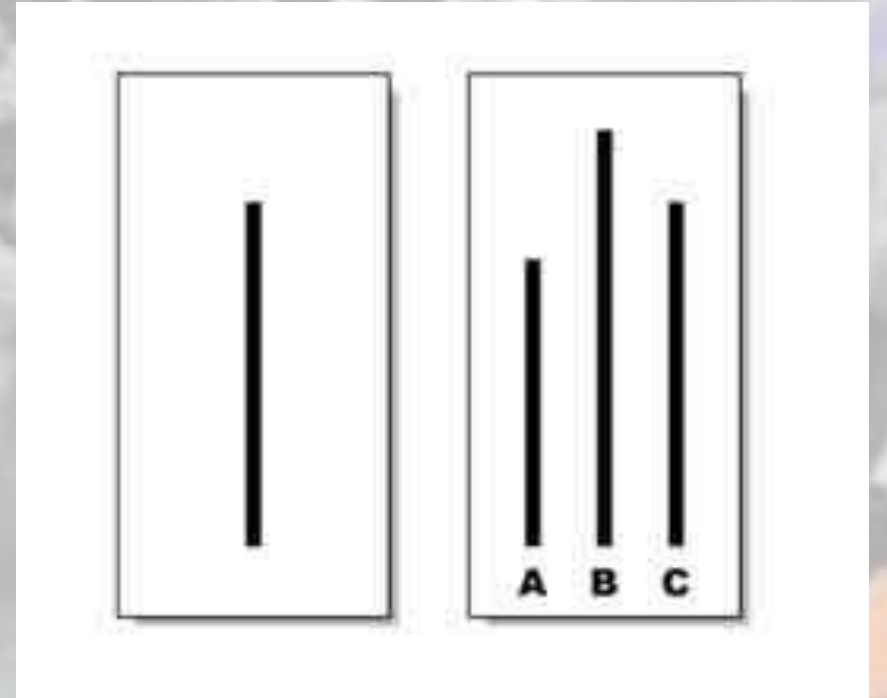
Asch Experiment in an Elevator

Experiment 1 – Candid Camera (Click the image to open)

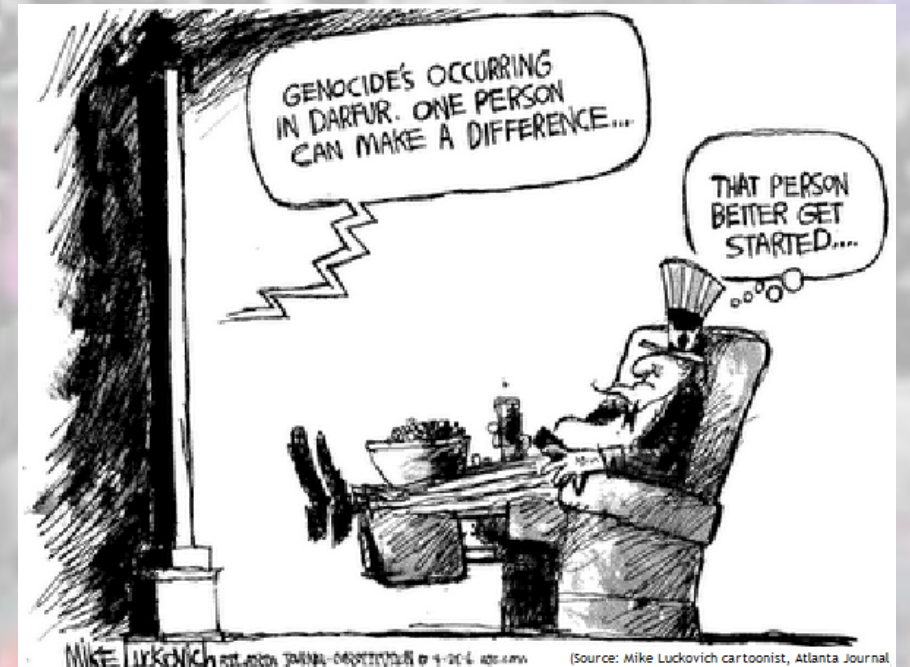**Experiment 2 – WYFFT (Click the Image to Open)**

Measuring Conformity: People are Sheep

Click on image to open video
with conformity experiment ->

The Bystander Effect

- The bystander effect occurs when the presence of others discourages an individual from intervening in an emergency situation
  - the perceived diffusion of responsibility and social influence
    - Onlookers are more likely to intervene if there are few or no other witnesses
    - Individuals in a group monitor the behavior of those around them to determine how to act

GENOCIDE'S OCCURRING IN DARFUR. ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE...

THAT PERSON BETTER GET STARTED....

MIKE LUCKOVICH ATLANTA JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

(Source: Mike Luckovich cartoonist, Atlanta Journal

Case Study: Kitty Genovese

- 1964 Kitty Genovese murder in New York City. Genovese was stabbed to death outside her apartment while bystanders who observed the crime did not step in to assist or call the police
  - Each onlooker concluded from their neighbors' inaction that their own personal help was not needed

Click on picture to watch video about Kitty Genovese Case ->