

Advanced Code of Influence

Book 10

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BOOK 10: SOCIAL IDENTITY, AFFILIATION & ATTRACTION

One of the things that truly make people *tick* is their own social identity. Social identity, according to one theory, is the result of a person's desire to have a positive self-concept. This positive self-concept is the direct result (at least according to the social identity theory) of one's affiliation with social groups that are perceived by *positively held* by the public.

When a person experiences the advantages of belonging to a group that has a positive value to society, he will most likely engage in behavior that will *increase* or at least maintain the positive image of the social group.

Determinants of Helpful Behavior

Helpful behavior or helpfulness is one of the most striking traits found in social groups. Helpful behavior allows members of a group to harmonize with each other.

There can be mutually helpful behavior between group members. But why do we engage in helpful behavior in the first place? Why do we bother helping others if we have our own troubles and goals in life? According to social psychologists, there are several factors at work here:

- Similarity
- Group membership
- Attractiveness
- Responsibility for misfortune

The first factor is *similarity*. Researchers have discovered that a person would be more motivated to help another person if the other person exhibits traits or characteristics that are *similar* to the characteristics of the would-be helper.

If we belong to a social group and another member of that social group was in need of help, that single similarity alone would motivate us to help the other person. As long as there is similarity, there is a rational ground for helpful behavior.

The second factor is group membership. Again, humans are naturally more attracted to offering something to members of the same group. This doesn't mean that humans will abandon other humans that belong to other groups.

I am simply pointing out that if a person were given a choice of helping a person from his own group and a person from *another group*, the

choice to help one's *own* would be the more logical choice. The third factor is attractiveness. Attractiveness is a powerful peripheral cue that works in almost every situation – and apparently, it works when you want to be helped by someone, too!

The fourth factor is *responsibility for misfortune*. This simply means that people are most likely to lend a helping hand if the person who is need is experiencing circumstances that are beyond his control. Inversely, if a person is suffering because of his own doing, we would be less motivated to help that person.

Affiliation

Affiliation is an essential social skill that produces immense benefits. People who affiliate with other people are happier and they are able to cope with stress more efficiently than people who do not have the ability to affiliate regularly.

This social skill is also as natural breathing because it begins to manifest quite concretely during adolescence and the drive to affiliate continues until late adulthood. We affiliate with people because this skill is tied closely to survival and growth. Affiliation ultimately helps a person join social groups that would ultimately contribute to his development as a human being.

Determinants of Affiliation

Different factors affect our desire for affiliation. The theory of privacy regulation states that a person who has been isolated for a long time would naturally want to affiliate with other people because there is a marked lack in affiliation and interaction. A person who has affiliated too much may feel that he has been crowded in too much by other people and he may want to *dissociate* to regain his privacy and his sense of personal space.

A second theory called the social affiliation model presents a different angle on affiliation. This theory states that a person does not really operate on the basis of what he wants at the moment alone but instead, he operates so that balance can be regained.

Each person has a particular level of need for affiliation and over time, each person will want to reach that balance. Reaching that balance would mean that stability has been finally achieved and naturally, any person who has achieved this would be happier.

The first two theories assume that people have more or less the same degree of desire for affiliation. The aforementioned theories *do not* take into consideration psychological and cultural differences. We have to take these two other factors into consideration if we want to understand peculiar variations in the desire to affiliate.

An introverted person is generally more responsive to affiliation. When an introvert affiliates, he feels an increased *need* to affiliate. This goes against his general nature toward social contact and so the introvert would most likely pull away from increase affiliation so that

his internal equilibrium or homeostasis will no longer be disturbed.

Extroverts on the other hand, respond different to affiliation and social contact. Extroverts are *not* easily physiologically aroused by affiliation. That's why they need to continually reach out to other people and to different social groups to reach *their* own internal balance.

Cultural differences affect the *nature* of affiliation. In individualistic societies, people reach out and affiliate with other people for *self-serving reasons*. People make friends and other social associations because they receive advantages and benefits. People who belong to more collectivist cultures view affiliation in a different manner. In collectivist cultures, people view affiliation with concepts like *obligation* and responsibility.

Determinants of Attraction

Time and time again, we encounter *attractiveness* in our exploration of persuasion, attribution, etc. Now would be the perfect time to actually discuss what *attraction* is and how it can work to increase one's influence.

Social psychologists define attraction as the impetus to approach and interact with another human being. Without attraction, business relationships, partnerships, friendships and even romantic relationships would not be possible at all. Where there is mutual agreement and trust involved, you need attraction as a stepping stone.

There are several factors that affect attraction:

- Physical traits
- Similarity to the self
- Complementary characteristics
- Reciprocity

With physical traits, we are drawn to physical characteristics or traits that are attractive to *us*. Make no mistake – there are no true universal marks of beauty. There are variations from country to country and from culture to culture. Each time period in history also has its own take on what is beautiful and what is not.

If you are looking for commonalities across cultures, there are a few. One of the most reliable commonality is the male preference for women who have a wide hips and small waists. The hourglass shape that is invoked by this ratio may be attractive to men because the ratio may signify that the other person is a healthy female.

Another commonality across cultures is that people are more attracted to people with increased facial symmetry. The more symmetrical the face, the more attractive the person becomes. Being free from facial asymmetry may signal that the other person is

not only healthy but also has good genes. Youthfulness, fertility and health are the hallmarks of attraction when it comes to physical traits.

The second factor is similarity to the self. Now, similarity is not limited to physical traits. People are also attracted to people who exhibit similar thinking and similar attitudes. What does this mean?

Well, at *first*, similarities to physical characteristics are important in the initial process of attraction. But once a relationship has already been established, *deeper similarities* are needed to sustain the relationship.

There is also a tendency to like people who are *alike* us at least in some ways because in this way, we avoid negative social evaluation because the other person would be more or less equal to us in appearance.

We know for a fact that males are more straightforward when it comes to attraction and finding the right mate and so forth. But can we say the same thing for women? Apparently not. One theory called the parental investment theory states that women are generally more reserved when it comes to attracting potential mates because:

- They can damage their reputation by attracting the wrong types of males
- They can end up investing more into a relationship than may not continue (i.e. pregnancy, childbirth, parenting)
- Women are generally more reserved with the way they communicate their interest in potential partners

The third factor is *complementary characteristics*. Surely, we are attracted to others with similar traits but we are also

attracted to individuals who have traits that *complement* our own traits. Complementary traits are traits that we don't have but we value these traits all the same.

The fourth and final factor is reciprocity. The concept of reciprocity is fairly straightforward. We tend to be more attracted to individuals who are showing signs that they like us, too. Inversely, if the other person shows disdain at our interest, we may not be as drawn to the person anymore.

Friendship & Love

Have you ever thought of how friendships actually work? It starts off with the process of *self-disclosure*. After identifying the person that we want to be friends with, we start sharing parts of our self to that person (i.e. our name and where we studied).

When we discover commonalities with the person, we begin to take an interest in him or her. We begin sharing deeper thoughts and more intimate information with the other person. This can be considered the seed of friendships.

It begins with an exchange of information that pertains directly to the self. The more you share yourself with the other person, the more you begin to trust the other person, too. If it doesn't work out, *social withdrawal* takes place.

You begin to dissociate with the person and the amount of information that you are sharing with that person begins to dwindle until finally, the information stops and the connection is finally broken.

Gender-Related Differences

Males and females think differently, no doubt about that – and it is enlightening to know that there are some quaint differences in the way males and females handle friendship, too:

1. Women tend to develop more intimate relationships with other people.
2. Women tend to share their thoughts and details of their lives more regularly than males.
3. Men typically don't share as much information because this type of personal disclosure is linked with vulnerability.
4. Men, surprisingly, engage in more physical contact with friends than women.

Types of Love

When attraction to another person progresses to *love*, you must understand that love actually has three forms:

- Passionate love
- Game-playing love
- Friendship love

When people start combining the *three primary forms* of love, we arrive at these *secondary forms*:

- Pragmatic love (friendship love & game-playing love)
- Possessive love (passionate love & game-playing love)
- Altruistic love (passionate love & friendship love)

Passionate love and companionate love have distinct traits, as well:

1. Passionate love is marked by longing for another person. There is intensity and the longing usually stays with the person for long periods of time. This is most apparent during the early stages of romantic love.

There is intensity and certain rawness to the emotions felt by one or both of the parties involved in the budding relationship. It is also possible that if a person is drawn to another person via passionate love, friends and former acquaintances are pushed out of the picture for the time being.

2. Companionate love is marked by having a somewhat rosy lens when it comes to the other person. When a person views another person through a rosy lens, he will only see the positive traits and none of the negative traits.

Companionate love is *more lasting* than mere passionate love. The intensity may

have been reduced, but at the same time, both the individuals will feel that they don't need that kind of rawness and intensity anymore because they are bonded to each other on a much deeper level.

Satisfaction & Commitment

Human relationships are *never* simple and easy to understand. In fact, social psychologists are only beginning to understand how to anchor fixed coordinates on some of the factors and components related to human relationships. Knowledge of these coordinates will ensure that you will be able to create meaningful and satisfying relationships, yourself. Here are some contributing factors to a satisfying relationship:

1. A relationship would most likely be satisfying if both parties are contributing something to the relationship and the

exchange between the people in the relationship is perceived as equal.

2.If there are no secrets between the people involved in the relationship, there would be heightened trust and therefore, there would also be satisfaction in the meaningful relationship.

3.Social comparison is also important; if a couple for instance was able to compare their own relationship with others and they found out that they had a better relationship; there would of course be increased satisfaction in the relationship.

4.Each individual has his own social network. It has been discovered that if there was a connection between these disparate social networks, both parties in the relationship would be happier.

5. The level of attachment to the other person may also spell a happier and more satisfying relationship. Researchers have been able to connect an increase in adult attachment with an increasing level of satisfaction in a relationship.

A Few Final Thoughts

Siddharta Gautama, one of the most celebrated spiritual teachers that this world has *ever* seen, is also one of the first thinkers who believed that more than anything, our own thoughts shaped and molded our physical realities.

Buddha always believed that each thought corresponded to specific emotions and actions and it was up to *us* to make sure that the world that we perceive is the *world that we actually desire*.

Because before our desires are actually fulfilled, we must first inscribe meaning upon the world. On its own, the world is bereft of meaning. It will only become meaningful if you actively inscribe your own truths upon it.

The same principle applies to things like human persuasion or conversion or influence. There can never be influence if you feel and think that it is not possible.

There *will* be no result if you don't take the steps to manifest what you desire in real life. And there will be *nothing at all* if you take all the theories you have now and put them in the back-burner, forever competing for attention with other activities in your life.

If you want to become a truly influential person, the strategies of influence that you have learned must become second nature.

Like a little child learning how to ride a bike for the first time in his life, the journey from point A to point B on a new machine is exciting and there is always an element of uncertainty. But the important thing here is that you continue the journey regardless of the bumps, scrapes and falls that you experience on the way.