

The Lecture Contains:

- ☰ What is social power?
- ☰ Social dependence/independence
- ☰ Surveillance
- ☰ Positive/negative influence
- ☰ Boomerang effect and reactance

◀ Previous Next ▶

What is social power?

- An individual's power may be understood as his/her ability to shape another person's behaviour or in other words, social power is the potential influence one may have over other by virtue of one's personal characteristics or social situations. The three lectures are devoted to an elaboration of this. However, it is important to understand various aspects or dimensions of social power :
 - Social dependence/independence
 - Surveillance
 - Positive/negative influence (boomerang effect and reactance)

Social dependence/independence

- A person may be influenced by another person but the influenced person may or may not be remain to be dependent on the influencer. For example, if one has the highest regards for a political leader, then he/she is going to continuously follow the leaders thought, actions and ideology. Thus, the person's thought and actions are continuously shaped by and dependent upon the leader. However, there are times when a person may not continue to be dependent on the other person despite getting influenced by him. For example, a senior student helped another student in solving a problem of mathematics. He did influence the junior student but the junior student learnt solving a problem but did not have the need to continuously get advice from him. This is known as socially independent influence.

Surveillance

- The influence on a person may be observed continuously by the influencer directly or indirectly. This surveillance may have a impact on the influenced as he/she always has a perception of being watched or noticed by the influencer. However, when the surveillance is not there, the influence also may fade away. A classic example of surveillance and its impact is the case of a child at home who study only when he feels that his actions are getting noticed by parents or other elders. When the surveillance is over, the child may stop studying.

◀ Previous Next ▶

Positive/negative influence

- There may be a positive influence of the influencer on the influenced person in terms of either rewards or inspiration that one may receive from the person in power. However, the person in power may also evoke a negative impact on the other person as influence produces some sort of discomfort to person getting influenced. There are two such types of negative influence: boomerang effect and reactance.

Boomerang effect and reactance

- When the potential influencer is disliked or distrusted by other persons, they may develop a completely opposite view to what the influencer was trying to develop among the people. For example, a son of a communist father may develop a completely different ideology because the father could not be trusted to actually adhere to the demands of the communist ideology. This development of a completely opposite view to what the influencer may try to have on the other persons is known as a boomerang effect.
- Reactance is also an opposite reaction to what the potential influencer might like to convey. However, this opposite reaction gets generated due to a threat to one's independence as perceived by the person. One may play guitar excessively as a reaction to being told not to do so. The person may view the command from the seniors not to play guitar in the hostel as a threat to his independence.