

Lecture # 14

CONFORMITY

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What is Conformity?

- **Conformity is a type of social influence involving a change in belief or behavior in order to fit in with a group.**
- **This change is in response to real (involving the physical presence of others) or imagined (involving the pressure of social norms / expectations) group pressure.**



What is Conformity? Conti...

- “Yielding to group pressures” (Crutchfield, 1955).
- Group pressure may take different forms, for example bullying, persuasion, teasing, criticism etc.
- Conformity is also known as majority influence (or group pressure).
- An agreement to the majority position, brought about either by a desire to ‘fit in’ or be liked (normative) or because of a desire to be correct (informational), or simply to conform to a social role (identification).



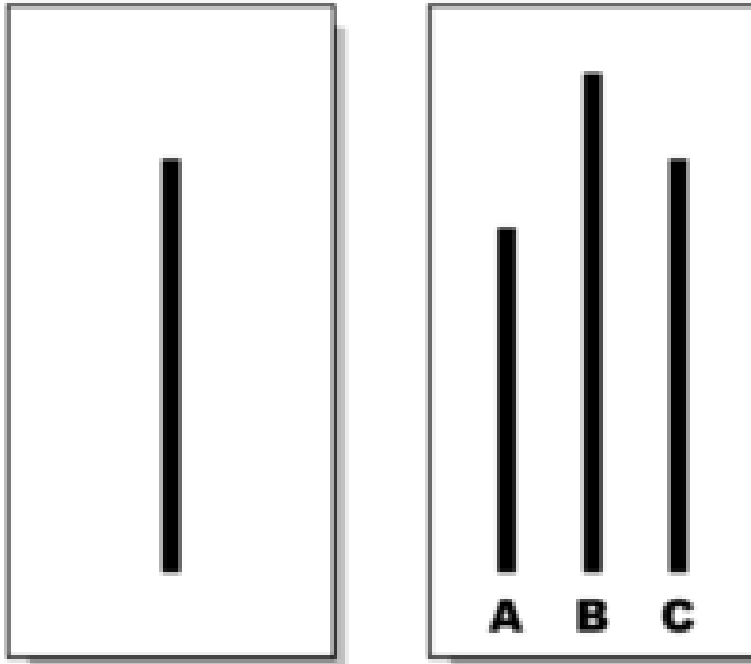
What causes people to conform?

- **Solomon Asch (1952)** perceptual judgment of line lengths. Which of 3 lines is closest in length to this line.
- In this type of experiment the consequences of non-conformity are unclear - there are no stated sanctions against non-conformity.
- An **experiment** to investigate the extent to which social pressure from a majority group could affect a person to conform.
- **People conform for two main reasons:** because they want to fit in with the group (normative influence) and because they believe the group is better informed than they are (informational influence).



Asch Experiment

- A control group (who did study alone) almost always gave correct answer.



Acceptance:
Publicly conformed
and privately agreed

What Predicts Conformity?

- **Group size**
- **Unanimity**
- **Cohesion**
- **Status**
- **Public response**
- **No prior commitment**



What Predicts Conformity? Conti...

- **Group cohesiveness** - when group members are attracted to each other.
- **Commitment to the initial judgment** where there is no prior commitment.
- **Self-aware people (private vs. public)** when people are privately self-aware they are less likely to conform; social standards are more influential if the person is publicly self-aware.
- **Self-presentation** if one is trying to present himself as intelligent, he will be perceived as more intelligent if he does not conform.
- **Need for individuation** the desire to maintain one's uniqueness.
- **Desire for personal control** - the theory of psychological reactance - people will react against attempts to control their behavioral freedom



What Predicts Conformity? Conti...

- **Makeup of group exerting the pressure** experts; members are important to the individual; members are comparable to the individual; feelings of insecurity in the relationship
- **Rewards and punishments** (normative pressure) wish to avoid punishment (rejection, ridicule, embarrassment); wish to gain acceptance or love
- **Information** (behavioral modeling) sometimes the behavior of others serves as a guide to how we should behave.



Forms of Conformity

Compliance:

- **Motivated by rewards and the avoidance of punishment.**
- **Lasts as long as the rewards last or as long as the threat lasts.**
- **Going along with the group behaviorally without being persuaded that the group is correct.**
- **Power is the major component.**



Compliance:

- **The concept of compliance is similar to conformity, yet slightly different.**
- **For compliance to occur within groups, one must adapt his/her actions to another's wishes or rules.**
- **A person that conforms must have a disposition that allows him/her to yield to others. Requests for and acts of compliance occur in everyone's lives. Simply asking someone to perform a task is a request for compliance. The most effective method to gain compliance is through rational persuasion and inspiration.**
- **The central aspect of conformity is that the person being influenced by the group change his/her attitudes and/or beliefs while the main point of compliance is the achievement of some specified task.**



Identification

- **Desire to be like the influencer.**
- **We adopt an opinion or a behavior because it puts us into a satisfying relationship with the influencer.**
- **The major component of this type of conformity is the attractiveness of the influencer.**



Internalization

- **Most permanent, most deeply rooted response to social influence.**
- **The desire to be right is the motive.**
- **Once accepted the behavior or the opinion becomes a part of our belief system separate from the source.**
- **Credibility of the influencer is important (expert and trustworthy).**



Example

	Example	External behaviour	Internal behaviour
Compliance	Listening to the same music as your friends even though you don't really like it	Saying the music is good to listen to	Not really liking the music and waiting to be alone so you can listen to music you really like
Internalisation	Becoming a vegetarian	Stopping eating meat	Changing your attitude to "meat is murder" and intending only to eat vegetarian food

Ingratiation Conformity

- Where a person conforms to impress or gain favor/acceptance from other people.
- It is similar to normative influence but is motivated by the need for social rewards rather than the threat of rejection, i.e., group pressure does not enter the decision to conform.



Types of Social Conformity

- **Man (1969)** states that “the essence of conformity is yielding to group pressure”. He identified three types of conformity: Normative, informational and ingratiation.
- **Kelman (1958)** distinguished between three different types of conformity: Compliance, Internalization and identification.



Comparison of the three:

- **Compliance** is the least enduring and has the least effect on the individual, because people comply merely to gain reward or to avoid punishment. Rewards and punishments are very important means to get people to learn and to perform specific activities but are limited as techniques of social influence because they must be ever present to be effective.
- **Continuous reward** or punishment is not necessary for identification. All that is needed is the individual's desire to be like that person. You will continue to hold beliefs similar to the SO as long as he remains important to you, he still holds the same beliefs, and those beliefs are not challenged by counter-opinions that are more convincing.
- **Internalization** is the most permanent response to social influence because your motivation to be right is a powerful and self-sustaining force.



Comparison of the three Conti...

- **In compliance**, the important component is *power* -the power of the influencer to dole out rewards and punishments. In identification, the crucial component is *attractiveness* - the attractiveness of the person with whom we identify.
- **Any of the three can determine behavior**. In the Asch studies, it seems obvious the subjects were complying with the unanimous opinion of the group in order to avoid the punishment of ridicule or rejection.
- **Circumstances** can increase the permanence of conformity produced by compliance or identification.

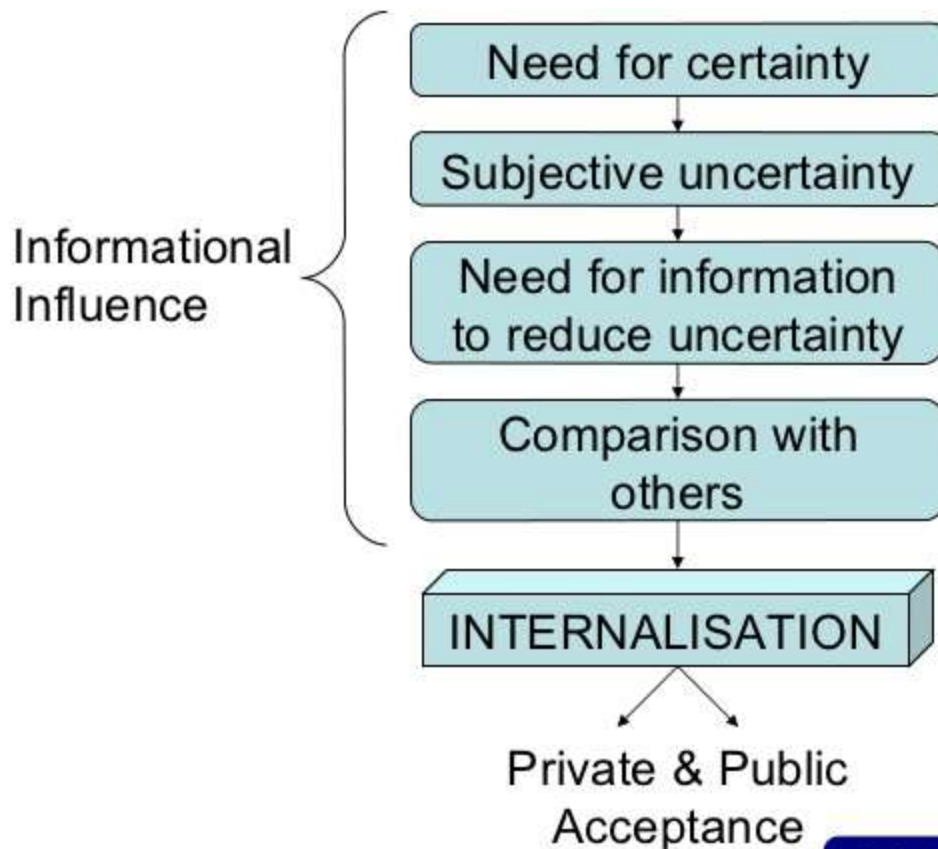


Informational influence

- **Informational social influence occurs when one turns to the members of one's group to obtain and accept accurate information about reality.**
- **Sometimes you may need to seek out experts, conform to the way others or a group are behaving, or look to some other source of information.**
- **One other way is to use informational social influence; you look to the behaviors of others who are also in the same or similar situation to see how they behave.**



Informational social influence



When Will People Conform to Informational Social Influence?

- **When the Situation Is Ambiguous.**

Ambiguity is the most crucial variable in determining whether people use each other as a source of information.

- **When the Situation Is a Crisis.**

Crisis situations leave us limited time to act, which may make us scared and panicky. If we turn to others who are also panicked for information, our own panic and irrationality may be intensified.

- **When Other People Are Experts.**

The more expertise or knowledge someone has, the more people will turn to them as a guide in an ambiguous situation. Unfortunately experts are not always reliable sources of information.

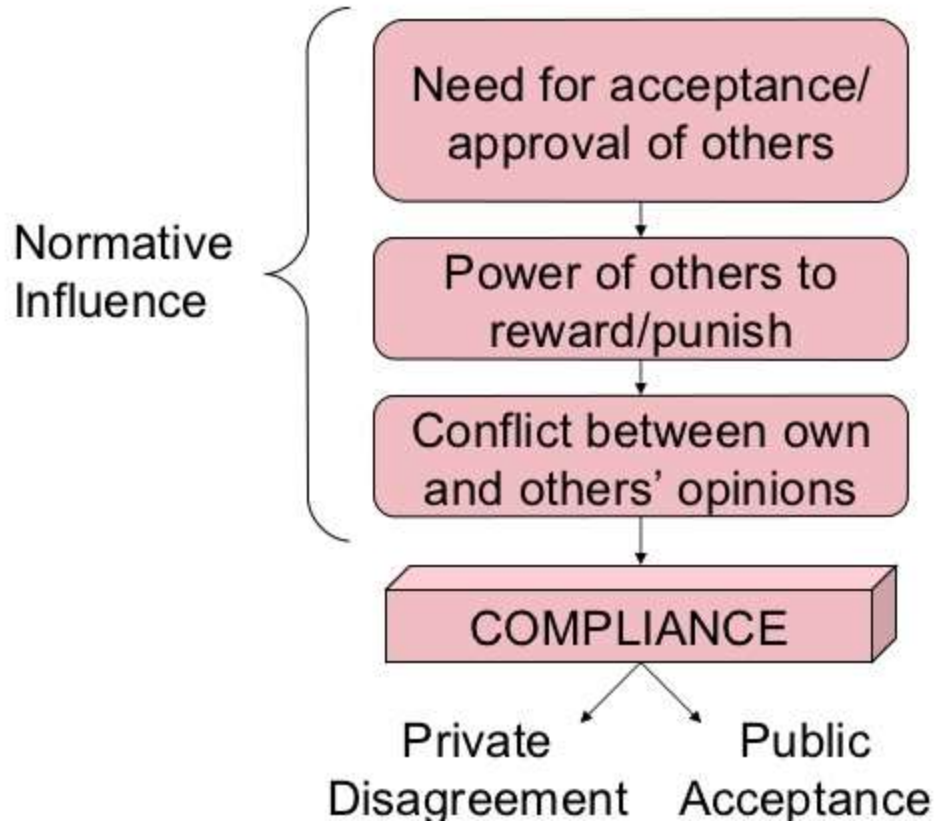


Normative influence

- Normative social influence occurs when one conforms to be liked or accepted by the members of the group.
- This need of social approval and acceptance is part of our state of humans.
- In addition to this, we know that when people do not conform with their group and therefore are deviants, they are less liked and even punished by the group.
- Normative influence usually results in public compliance, doing or saying something without believing in it.



Normative social influence



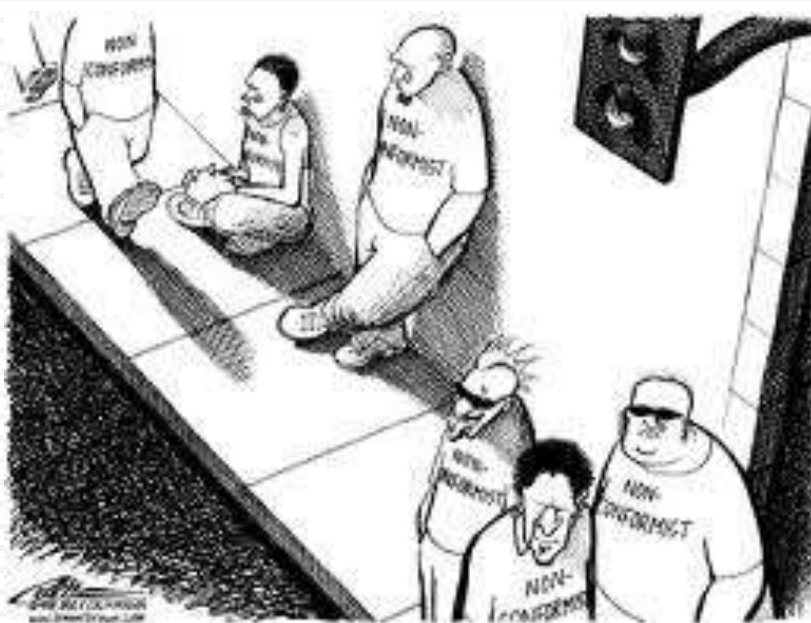
Mindless conformity

Using others as cues to behavior without thinking or dealing with the dilemma of perception/ thoughts and others' perceptions and thoughts.



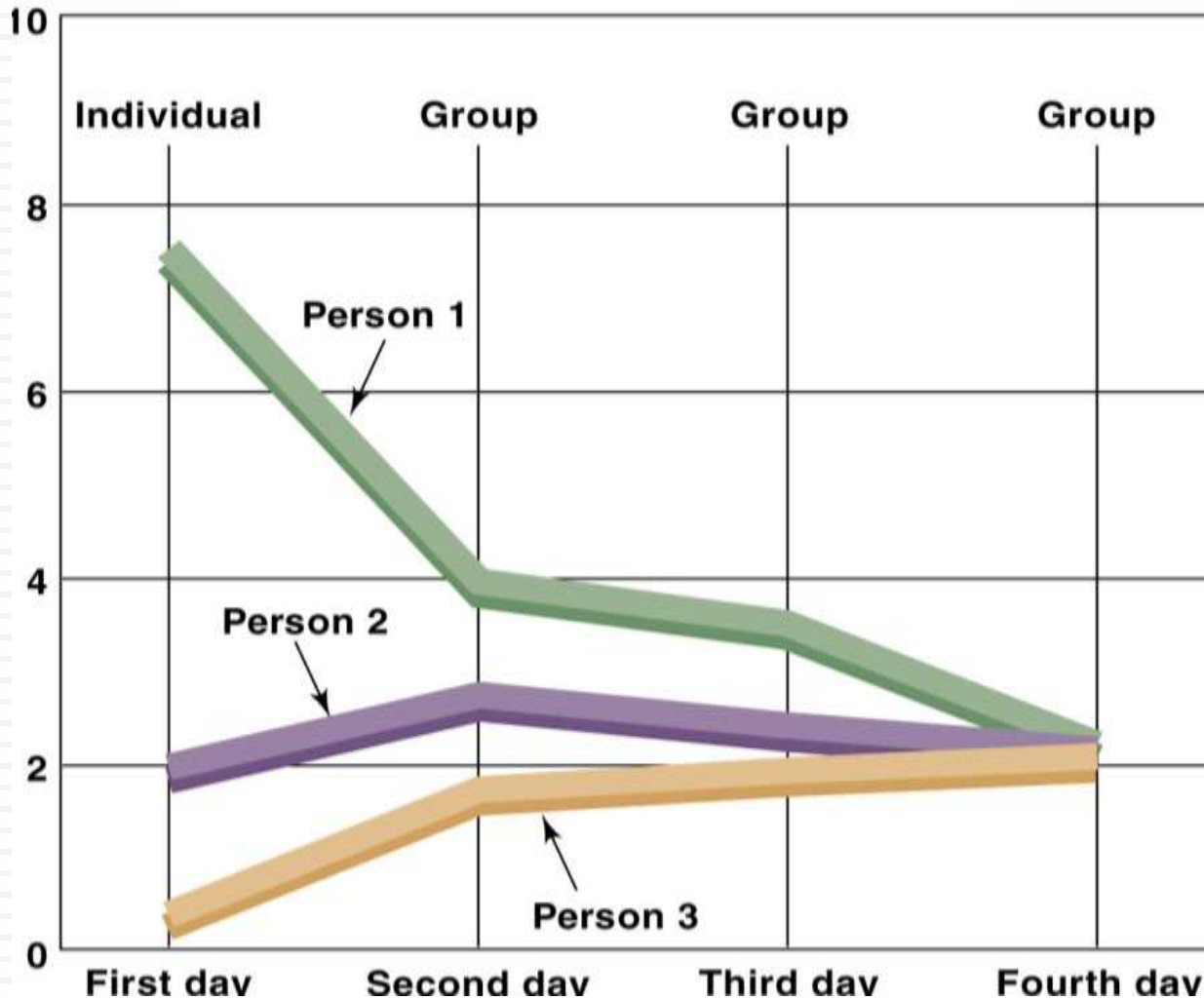
Sherif's Study

- Sherif (1935) made use of the autokinetic effect to perform a classic conformity study. If you look at a stationary light in an otherwise dark room the light will appear to move, because your eyes have no other reference point.
- Sherif found that a subject's reports of movement were highly influenced by other people's estimates.



Autokinetic Effect Study

Estimated movement, inches



Acceptance:
Publicly conformed
and privately agreed

Difference between Asch & Sherif studies

- **Sherif (moving light)**
 - ▣ **Subject didn't know wasn't correct answer**
 - Reasonable to consider other's views
 - Participants later adopted social norms
 - Conformity leads to internalization
- **Asch (parallel lines)**
 - ▣ **Participants knew there was a correct answer**
 - Conformity does not lead to internalization



Obedience

Act of compliance to someone or a group or institution with power over us. Although acts of compliance may be impermanent this does not mean they are trivial.



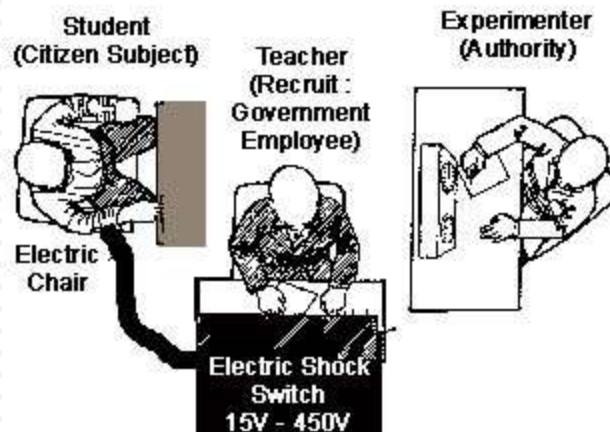
Stanley Milgram: Obedience to Authority

- **Obedience** is a form of social influence where an individual acts in response to a direct order from another individual, who is usually an authority figure. It is assumed that without such an order the person would not have acted in this way.
- **Obedience** occurs when you are told to do something (authority), whereas conformity happens through social pressure (the norms of the majority). Obedience involves a hierarchy of power / status. Therefore, the person giving the order has a higher status than the person receiving the order.



Milgram's Study

- He assigned each of the subjects to the role of teacher. Each subject was told that his task was to help another subject like himself learn a list of word pairs.
- Each time the learner made a mistake, the teacher was to give the learner an electric shock by flipping a switch.
- The teacher was told to increase the shock level each time the learner made a mistake, until a dangerous shock level was reached.



Milgram (1974)

Participants Who Stopped at This Level

Shock Level (Volts)	Number	Percent
300	5	12.5
315	4	10.0
330	2	5.0
345	1	2.5
360	1	2.5
375	1	2.5
450	26	65.0

The social psychology of this century reveals a major lesson:

Often it is not so much the kind of person a man is as the kind of situation in which he finds himself that determines how he will act.

Factors cause people to carry obedience to extremes:

- People justify their behavior by assigning responsibility to the authority rather than themselves.
- People define the behavior that's expected of them as routine.
- People don't want to be rude or offend the authority.
- People obey easy commands first and then feel compelled to obey more and more difficult commands. This process is called entrapment, and it illustrates the foot-in-the-door phenomenon.



Zimbardo experiment

- **Study on obedience** was conducted at Stanford University during the 1970s.
- **Phillip Zimbardo** was the main psychologist responsible for the experiment. In the Stanford Prison Experiment, college age students were put into a pseudo prison environment in order to study the impacts of "social forces" on participants behavior.
- **Unlike the Milgram study** in which each participant underwent the same experimental conditions, here using random assignment half the participants were prison guards and the other half were prisoners.
- The experimental setting was made to physically resemble a prison while simultaneously inducing "a psychological state of imprisonment".

Zimbardo experiment Conti..

- People will readily conform to the social roles they are expected to play, especially if the roles are as strongly stereotyped as those of the prison guards.
- The “prison” environment was an important factor in creating the guards’ brutal behavior (none of the participants who acted as guards showed sadistic tendencies before the study).
- Therefore, the roles that people play can shape their behavior and attitudes



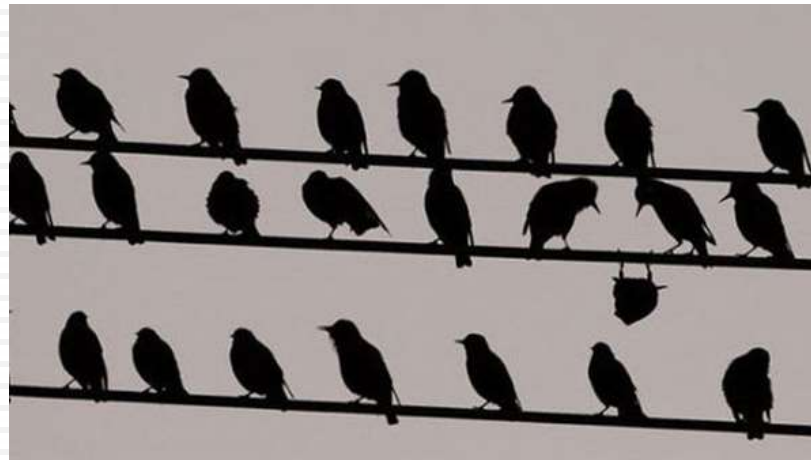
Conformity in the Workplace

- **Conformity in the workplace refers to following workplace rules as well as adhering to traditional or socially expected methods of doing business and using familiar processes.**
- **Dress Code**
- **Regulations**
- **Employee Initiative**
- **Socially Expected Behavior**



Non Conformity

- Not everyone conform to social pressure. Indeed, there are many factors that contribute to an individual's desire to remain independent of the group.
- For example, [Smith and Bond \(1998\)](#) discovered cultural differences in conformity between western and eastern countries. People from western cultures (such as America and the UK) are more likely to be individualistic and don't want to be seen as being the same as everyone else.



THANK YOU

