

# Social influence and the branch davidians

Experience, Human Nature



Social Influence And The Branch Davidians Abstract I examined compliance gaining strategies used by David Koresh to influence his followers. His claim to be Jesus Christ himself, and his promise to grant his followers eternal life, was highly effective in obtaining his followers compliance. I examined the Branch Davidian's response to David Koresh's influence. I observed their willingness to surrender their basic human needs, personal safety, and that of their children. Compliance-gaining strategies used by the Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) agents during the 1993 siege at the Branch Davidian compound were also examined.

Social Influence and The Branch Davidians David Koresh used various compliance gaining strategies to gain the allegiance of his followers who according to Time. com (1993) were also known as the Branch Davidians. His followers responded with compliance, ultimately arming themselves in a standoff at their compound in Waco Texas, against the Bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms. The ATF then used compliance gaining strategies in a failed attempt to end the standoff peacefully. David Koresh used methods such as moral appeal, promises, and threats as compliance gaining strategies.

It could be considered immoral for a religious person to choose to oppose God, therefore a moral appeal was a highly effective compliance gaining strategy for Koresh to use. Time. com (1993) wrote that Koresh taught his followers saying, " if the Bible is true, then I'm Christ. " He was appealing to their desire to be moral people who obey the requests of their Lord and Savior. Relentlessly delivering scriptures to his followers was another form of

moral appeal. Koresh implored their compliance by appealing to their moral commitment to obey the scriptures of the Bible.

Koresh realized that his followers would accept the logic that moral people do not disobey the Bible. Time. com (1993) wrote that David Koresh quoted the Bible (Revelation 2, English Standard Version) saying “ Do not fear what you are about to suffer...Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life. ” Koresh was using a strategy known as “ promise” (Alberts, 2009, p. 11), to gain compliance. Koresh was promising his followers that, just as the Bible foretold, their actions would indeed be rewarded. Koresh used the threat of war as a compliance gaining strategy.

He convinced his followers that they would eventually have to prove their allegiance to him by waging war against the enemy. If they were going to be prepared for the impending war, it would be necessary for them to watch movies that prepared them mentally for war. They would also have to participate in military style training, in order to ensure their victory over their enemies. Koresh convinced his followers that the presence of the ATF at their compound was indeed the sign that the war that they were expecting was upon them.

David Koresh’s followers responded to compliance gaining strategies with compliance, obedience, and conformity. Females of the group showed compliance by marrying David Koresh and by allowing their daughters to marry him as well. Their tendency to comply may have been because they perceived Koresh as having the authority to demand these unions. Another possibility is that their commitment to the group necessitated consistency in

their actions in support of the group. This would require that they comply with all demands made upon group members. Group members conformed to the explicit rules of the group.

According to Time. com (1993), Koresh proclaimed, “ all the women in the world belonged to him and only he had the right to procreate. ” Therefore, the explicit rules of the group dictated that David Koresh had a right to sleep with any woman in the group. Group members conformed to implicit rules of the group as well. Its members did not question David Koresh’s authority. Koresh instructed his followers to ready themselves for war by training for it. So group members displayed obedience to his demands by participating in what Time. com (1993) reported as “ military style drills” in preparation for war.

David Koresh’s followers displayed obedience when they armed themselves against police at their compound in Waco, Texas. The bureau of Alcohol Tobacco and Firearms used “ liking” (Alberts, 2009, p. 11) as a compliance gaining strategy during the standoff with David Koresh and his followers. This strategy proved to be effective at times and ineffective at other times. Time. com (1993) reported that ATF agents used a “ respectful” approach. This approach to gain compliance was initially successful and it resulted in the release of twenty-one children and sixteen adults.

However, because the ATF used this strategy excessively, it lost its effectiveness and ultimately it garnered a response in opposition to the previous response. According to Time. com (1993), Koresh ultimately responded with disdain and mockery to repeated attempts by the ATF to

userspectas a strategy to gain his compliance. The ATF's failure to achieve compliance with requests that the group members exit the compound resulted in the deaths of the very people that they were attempting to protect. The compound, set ablaze, claimed the lives of numerous Branch Davidians.

Compliance gaining strategies can be highly effective. Unfortunately, in addition to positive results, these strategies can produce negative results as well. Compliance gaining strategies, when effective can lead to a person's freedom from hostile captors. However, failed attempts at these strategies can also result in the death of many people. Compliance, obedience, and conformity can lead to a willingness to make choices that society at large would deem reprehensible. These types of social influence can cause a mother to neglect her maternal instincts and willingly put her children in dangerous life-threatening situations.

Compliance can be a formidable weapon against a perceived threat.

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