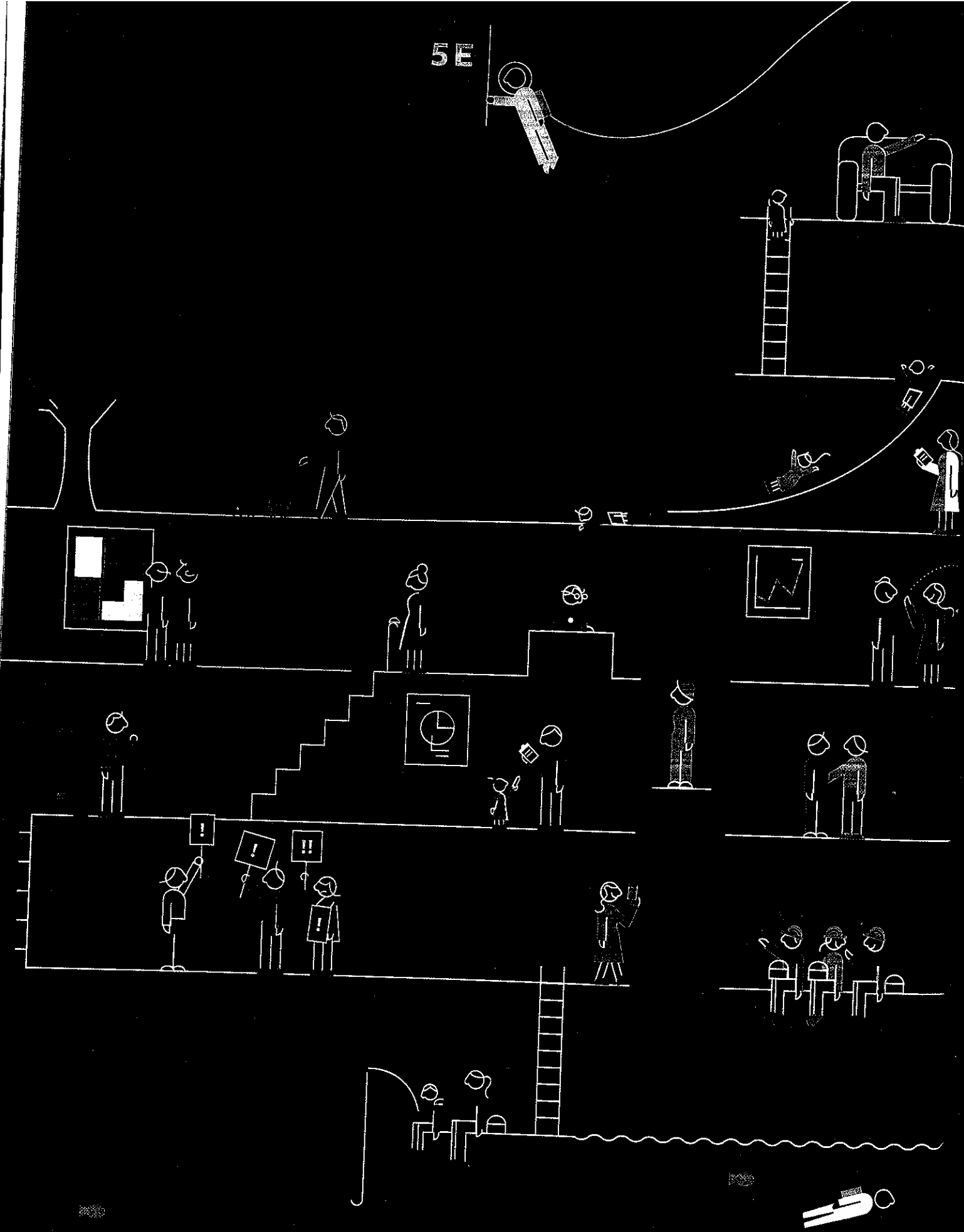


5E



FIFTH EDITION

Social Psychology

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W. W. Norton & Company • New York • London

אוניברסיטת בן-גוריון בנגב
הספרייה

Social Influence

IN 1980, YOU'D HAVE BEEN MORE LIKELY to see a woman smoking a cigar than sporting a tattoo. Back then, tattoos were rarely seen on anyone besides sailors and prison inmates. Now you wouldn't be surprised to see architects, accountants, doctors, judges, even professors with tattoos. According to a 2016 study, three in ten adults have at least one tattoo (Harris Poll, 2016).

The growing popularity of tattoos over the past few decades reflects the power of social influence. The many people who paid for permanent markings on their body didn't suddenly sense the virtues of body art on their own; they influenced one another. The influence was sometimes implicit ("Look at that cool arrow Jill has on her ankle") and sometimes explicit ("Check out our fraternity letters on my triceps; you should get them too").

Social influence takes many forms. It contributes to prison guards abusing inmates (see Chapter 1), schoolchildren failing to stop a bully, and soldiers suppressing their fear and charging into battle. Sometimes people consciously decide to copy others or comply with requests; other times they just go along, unaware they're being influenced. The power of social influence can be seen in studies of how much people in different social networks influence each other. You are 40 percent more likely to suffer from obesity if a family member or friend is obese. You're also 20 percent more likely to be obese if a *friend* of your friend is obese and 10 percent more likely if a friend of a friend of a friend is obese. This pattern, which seems to hold through three degrees of connection in social networks, has been demonstrated in studies of drinking behavior, smoking, and general levels of happiness. If a friend of your friend is happy, you're more likely to be happy too (Christakis & Fowler, 2013; Ejima, 2017).

OUTLINE

What Is Social Influence?

Conformity

Compliance

Obedience to Authority



Why are tattoos viewed so differently today than they were in decades past?



A SOCIAL INFLUENCE NETWORK

This depiction shows how happiness clusters among friends, spouses, and siblings in a sample of participants in Framingham, Massachusetts. Each point represents a participant (circles for women, squares for men), and the lines between each point represent their relationship (black for siblings, red for friends and spouses). The color of each point represents that person's happiness level: blue for the least happy participants, yellow for the most happy, and green for those in between. You can readily see that the most and least happy people cluster together.

Source: Fowler & Christakis, 2008, © The BMJ.

This effect is partly due to shared genes and partly to what is called homophily, the tendency for people to associate disproportionately with people who are like them (see Chapter 10). However, not all these social network effects result from homophily and genetics. Some are the result of social influence. In one telling experiment, someone canvassed residents door-to-door and encouraged them to vote. The canvassing influenced not just the person at the door, but other household members as well (Nickerson, 2008). Another study examined whether participants in a game where money was at stake cooperated with one another or focused on their narrow self-interest (Fowler & Christakis, 2010). Everyone played many rounds of the game, with each participant randomly assigned to a different four-person group each round. The investigators found that whether a person was altruistic on, say, round 3 had been influenced by how selfish or altruistic that person's groupmates had been on round 2. But that person was also influenced by what her round 2 groupmates had experienced with *their* groupmates on round 1. Because the participants were strangers randomly assigned to different groups, the results must have been due to social influence, not homophily or genetics. Thus, some types of behavior truly are contagious.

The topic of social influence highlights an important theme first raised in Chapter 1: many elements of a situation can profoundly affect behavior. In examining social influence, this chapter discusses a number of "situationist classics" in social psychology—experiments that have become well known, in both the field of psychology and the broader culture, for revealing how seemingly inconsequential details of a social situation can have powerful effects on behavior. ■



SOCIAL INFLUENCE AND FASHION

Social influence affects what we do and say and how we present ourselves to others. (A) In the 1940s, tattoos were rarely seen on anyone other than sailors and soldiers. (B, C) Today, tattoos are common on both men and women.

What Is Social Influence?

Social influence refers to the many ways people affect one another. It involves changes in behavior or attitudes that result from the comments, actions, or simply the presence of others. Other people routinely try to influence us—a friend's pressure to go out drinking, an advertiser's efforts to get us to adopt the latest fashion, a charity's plea for money, or the attempts of a parent, politician, or priest to shape our moral, political, or religious values. And we ourselves often try to influence others, as when we unconsciously smile at someone for actions we like, frown at someone for behavior we dislike, or deliberately try to coax a friend into doing us a favor. Effective interactions with others require knowing when to yield to their attempts to influence us and when—and how—to resist. Effective social interaction also demands that we exercise some skill in our own attempts to influence others.

Social psychologists distinguish among several types of social influence. The most familiar form of influence is **conformity**, defined as changing one's behavior or beliefs in response to some real (or imagined) pressure from others. As noted earlier, the pressure to conform can be implicit, as when you decide to toss out your loose-fitting jeans in favor of those with a tighter cut (or vice versa) simply because other people are doing so. But conformity pressure can also be explicit, as when members of a peer group pointedly encourage one another to smoke cigarettes, try new drugs, or push the envelope on the latest extreme sport.

When conformity pressure is sufficiently explicit, it blends into another type of social influence called **compliance**, which is when a person responds favorably to an explicit request by another person. Compliance attempts can come from people with some power over you, as when your boss asks you to run an errand, or they can come from peers, as when a classmate asks to borrow your notes. Compliance attempts from powerful people often aren't as nuanced and sophisticated as those from peers because they don't have to be. (Think how much easier it would be for your professor to persuade you to loan her \$20 than it would be for the person who happens to be sitting next to you in the classroom.) Another type of social influence, **obedience**, occurs when a more powerful person, an authority figure, issues a demand (rather than a request), to which the less powerful person submits.

Conformity

If you went back in time to the 1930s and visited any commuter train station, you would notice a number of similarities to today's commuting scene, as well as a few obvious differences. One important similarity is that most people would keep to the right so that collisions and inconvenience are kept to a minimum. But two important differences would stand out: nearly all the commuters in the 1930s were men, and nearly all of them wore hats. The transition from a predominantly male workforce in the 1930s to today's more gender-egalitarian workplace was the product of all sorts of social influences, many of them intentional and hard fought. But what about the hats? Was their disappearance over the years deliberate? If so, who did the deliberating? It's hard to resist the conclusion that this trend was much more mindless—that most people simply copied the clothing choices of everyone else.

social influence The many ways people affect one another, including changes in attitudes, beliefs, feelings, and behavior resulting from the comments, actions, or even the mere presence of others.

conformity Changing one's behavior or beliefs in response to explicit or implicit pressure (real or imagined) from others.

compliance Responding favorably to an explicit request by another person.

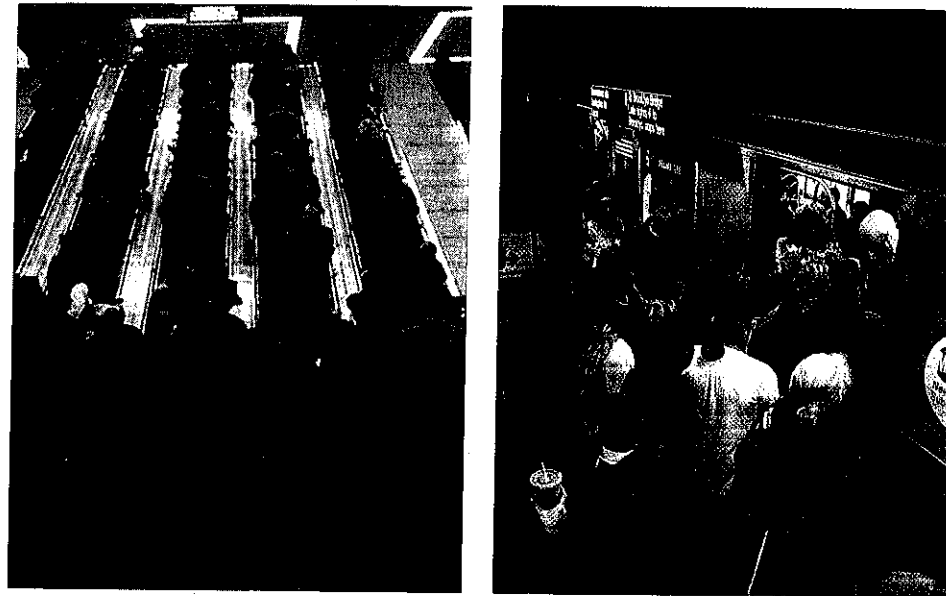
obedience In an unequal power relationship, submitting to the demands of the person in authority.

"Be regular and orderly in your life like a bourgeois, so that you may be violent and original in your work."

—GUSTAVE FLAUBERT,
NINETEENTH-CENTURY
FRENCH NOVELIST

CONFORMITY PRESSURES IN DAILY LIFE

Conformity to what others are doing can be seen in these comparative images of commuters during the 1930s and commuters today. Nearly all the earlier commuters wore hats on their way to work, but very few do so now.



Is the tendency to go along with others a good thing or a bad thing? In today's Western society, which prizes autonomy and uniqueness, the word *conformity* seems negative to most people. If someone called you a conformist, for instance, you probably wouldn't take it as a compliment. To be sure, some types of social influence *are* bad, such as going along with a crowd to pull a harmful prank or drive a vehicle while intoxicated. Other types of conformity, however, are neither good nor bad, such as conforming to the norm of wearing very loose pants (as in the 1990s) or tighter pants (as in the 2000s).

Still other types of conformity are clearly beneficial. Conformity eliminates potential conflict and makes human interaction much smoother, and it allows us not to have to think so much about every possible action. Conformity plays a big part, for example, in getting people to suppress anger; to pay taxes; to form lines at the theater, museum, and grocery store; and to stay to the right side of the sidewalk or roadway (in the United States anyway). Would any of us really want to do away with those conformist tendencies? Indeed, evolutionary psychologists and anthropologists have argued that a tendency to conform is generally beneficial. We are often well served by doing what others are doing, unless we have a good reason not to (Boyd & Richerson, 1985; Henrich & Boyd, 1998).

Automatic Mimicry

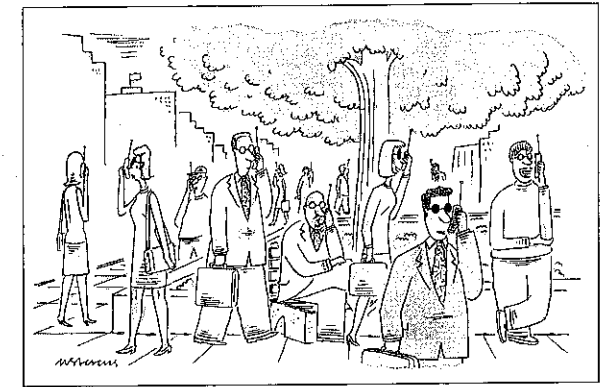
Perhaps the most subtle form of conformity is our tendency to mindlessly imitate other people's behavior and movements. It's often said that yawning and laughter are contagious, but a great deal of other behavior is contagious as well. Like it or not, we're all nonconscious copycats: we all mimic those around us.

The tendency to reflexively mimic the posture, mannerisms, expressions, and other actions of those around us has been examined experimentally. In one study, undergraduates took part in two 10-minute sessions in which each of them, along with another participant, described various photographs from popular magazines, such as *Newsweek* and *Time* (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). The other participant was, in reality, a confederate of the experimenter, and there was a different confederate

in each of the two sessions. The confederate in one session frequently rubbed his or her face, whereas the confederate in the other session continuously shook his or her foot. As the participant and confederate went about their business of describing the various photographs, the participant was surreptitiously videotaped. The videotapes were taken of the participants only—the confederates weren't visible on the tape—so the experimenters watching the tapes could not have been affected by knowledge of what movement—face rubbing or foot shaking—the confederates were doing. As predicted, the participants tended to mimic (conform to) the behavior exhibited by the confederate. The participants shook their feet more often in the presence of a foot-shaking confederate and rubbed their faces more often when next to a face-rubbing confederate (Figure 9.1).

REASONS FOR MIMICRY Why do we mindlessly copy the behavior of other people? There appear to be two reasons. William James (1890) provided the first explanation by proposing his principle of **ideomotor action**, whereby merely thinking about a behavior makes performing that behavior more likely. Simply thinking about eating a bowl of ice cream, for example, makes us more apt to open the freezer, take out the carton, and dig in. The thought that we might type the wrong letter on the keyboard makes us more prone to typing that very letter (Wegner, 1994; Wegner, Ansfield, & Pilloff, 1998). The principle of ideomotor action is based on the fact that the brain regions responsible for perception overlap with those responsible for action. When this principle is applied to mimicry, it means that when we see others behave in a particular way, the idea of that behavior is brought to mind (consciously or otherwise) and makes us more likely to behave that way ourselves.

The second reason we reflexively mimic others is to facilitate smooth, gratifying interaction and, in so doing, to foster social connection. People tend to like those who mimic them more than those who don't, even when they're unaware of being mimicked (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). What's more, people who have been mimicked tend to engage in more prosocial behavior (behavior intended to help others) immediately afterward, such as donating money to a good cause or



"I don't know why. I just suddenly felt like calling."

ideomotor action The phenomenon whereby merely thinking about a behavior makes performing it more likely.

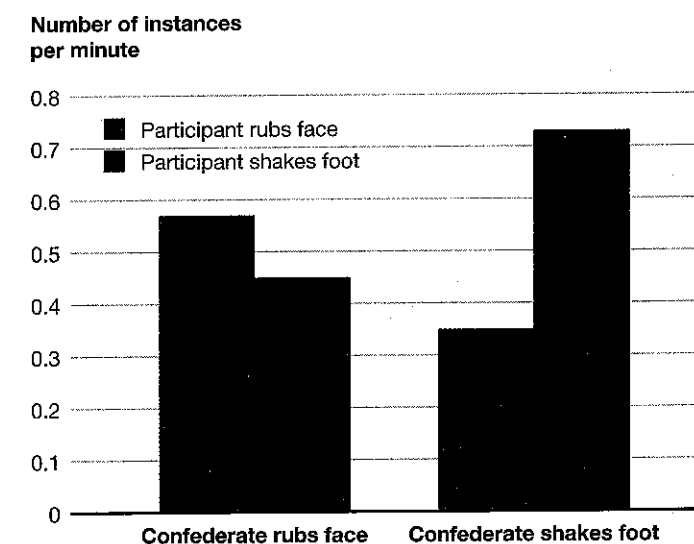


FIGURE 9.1 UNCONSCIOUS MIMICRY This graph shows the average number of times per minute participants performed an action (face rubbing, foot shaking) while in the presence of someone performing that action or not, demonstrating that people tend to mindlessly mimic the behavior of those around them. Source: Adapted from Chartrand & Bargh, 1999.



IDEOMOTOR ACTION AND CONFORMITY

Seeing others behave in a particular way sometimes makes us nonconsciously mimic their postures, facial expressions, and behavior. Before the signing of the 1995 Middle East Peace Accord, U.S. President Bill Clinton, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, and King Hussein of Jordan all adjusted their ties, as Yasser Arafat, who was not wearing a tie, looked on.

leaving a larger tip for the person who mimicked them (van Baaren, Holland, Kawakami, & van Knippenberg, 2004; van Baaren, Holland, Steenaert, & van Knippenberg, 2003). Studies have shown that our tendency to mimic others is particularly strong when we feel a need to affiliate with others and when the others in question are well liked (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Lakin & Chartrand, 2003; Leighton, Bird, Orsini, & Heyes, 2010; Stel et al., 2010). Mimicry seems to be a helpful first step toward goodwill and harmonious interaction.

Informational Social Influence and Sherif's Conformity Experiment

Sometimes people conform to one another a bit more consciously, as illustrated by an early conformity experiment by Muzafer Sherif (1936). Sherif was interested in how groups influence the behavior of individuals by shaping how reality is perceived. He noted that even our most basic perceptions are influenced by frames of reference. In the well-known Müller-Lyer illusion shown in **Figure 9.2**, for example, one vertical line appears longer than the other because of how the lines are "framed" by the two sets of arrows. Sherif designed his study to examine how other people can serve as a *social* frame of reference to change our perception of reality.

Sherif's experiment was built around what's called the autokinetic illusion—the sense that a stationary point of light in a completely dark environment is moving. Ancient astronomers first noted this phenomenon, which occurs because in complete darkness there are no other stimuli, or frames of reference, to help the viewer discern where the light is located. Perhaps, Sherif thought, other people in the same completely dark space would serve as a social frame of reference that

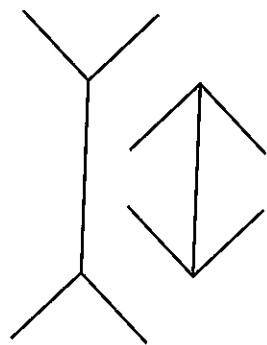


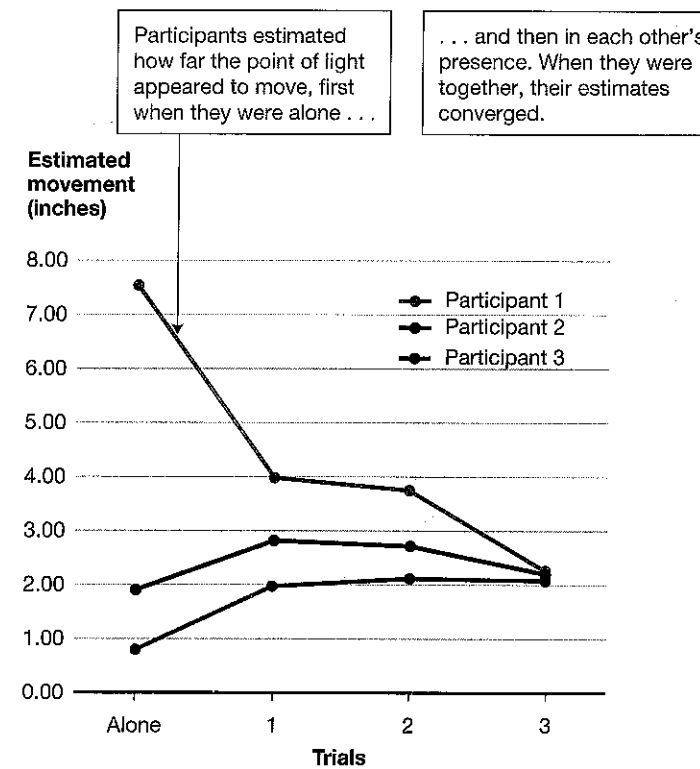
FIGURE 9.2
THE MÜLLER-LYER ILLUSION

The framing of the vertical lines by the arrows affects how the viewer perceives their lengths. Even though the two vertical lines are exactly the same length, the one on the left appears longer than the one on the right because of its outward-pointing "fins" at the top and bottom, as opposed to the inward-pointing fins at the top and bottom of the line on the right.

would influence the viewer's perceptions of the light's movement. To start off, Sherif put individual participants in a darkened room alone, presented them with a stationary point of light on trial after trial, and had them estimate how far it "moved" each time. Some people thought, on average, that the light moved very little on each trial (say, 2 inches), and others thought it moved a good deal more (say, 8 inches).

Sherif's next step was to bring several participants into the room together and have them call out their estimates. He found that people's estimates tended to converge over time. Those who individually had thought the light moved a fair amount soon lowered their estimates; those who individually had thought the light moved very little soon raised theirs (**Figure 9.3**). Sherif argued that everyone's individual judgments quickly fused into a group norm, and that norm influenced how far participants reported seeing the light move. A follow-up experiment reinforced his interpretation: when participants came back for individual testing up to one year later, their judgments still showed the influence of their group's earlier responses (Rohrer, Baron, Hoffman, & Swander, 1954).

Social psychologists typically interpret the behavior of Sherif's participants to be the result of **informational social influence**—the reliance on other people's comments and actions as an indication of what's likely to be correct, proper, or effective (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955). We want to be right, and the opinions of other people can be a useful source of information to draw on. (Remember this concept of *informational* social influence, as we will soon contrast it in depth with another type of social influence.) The tendency to draw on other people's comments, actions, and opinions as useful sources of information is most pronounced when we're uncertain about what is factually correct or are in unfamiliar situations and are uncertain about how to behave. For example, we're more likely to conform to others' views on subjects we have only vague ideas about, such as



informational social influence The influence of other people that results from taking their comments or actions as a source of information about what is correct, proper, or effective.

FIGURE 9.3
INFORMATIONAL SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Sherif's conformity experiment used the autokinetic illusion to assess group influence. Participants' estimates tended to become more similar over time. Source: Adapted from Sherif, 1936.

macroeconomic policy, than on familiar topics, such as how much more fun it would be to vacation in Northern Italy versus North Korea. And we're more likely to conform to what others are doing when we are in a foreign country than when we are in the familiar environment of our own country.

Note that the task Sherif asked his participants to perform was about as ambiguous as it gets, so informational social influence was strong. The light, in fact, didn't move at all—it just appeared to move. The uncertainty of the light's movement left the participants open to the influence of others. (See also Baron, Vandello, & Brunzman, 1996; Levine, Higgins, & Choi, 2000; Tesser, Campbell, & Mickler, 1983.)

Normative Social Influence and Asch's Conformity Experiment

You might be wondering: What's the big deal here? It makes sense that participants conformed to one another's judgments. After all, there was in fact no right answer, and participants couldn't have felt confident in their own estimates. Why *not* rely on others? If this is your reaction, then you're thinking just like another pioneer of conformity research, psychologist Solomon Asch. Asch's experiment, although informative about a certain type of conformity, didn't address situations in which there is a clear conflict between an individual's own judgment and that of the group. Sherif's findings don't apply, for example, to the experience of knowing you've had too much to drink to drive safely while your peers are urging you to get behind the wheel ("Come on. Don't be a wimp, you'll be fine"). Asch predicted that in a case of clear conflict between a person's own position and the viewpoint of the group, there would be far less conformity than that observed by Sherif. He was right. The reduced rate of conformity, however, was not what made Asch's experiment one of the most famous in the history of psychology. What made his study so well known was how often participants actually *did* conform, even when they thought the group's viewpoint was completely crazy (Levine, 1999; Prislin & Crano, 2012).

In this famous experiment (Asch, 1956), eight male students were gathered together to perform a simple perceptual task: determining which of three lines was the same length as a target line (Figure 9.4). Each person called out his judgment publicly, one at a time. The task was so easy that the experience was uneventful, boring even—at first.

On the third trial, however, one participant found that his private judgment was at odds with the expressed opinions of everyone else in the group. He was the only true participant in the experiment; the seven others were confederates instructed by Asch to respond incorrectly. The confederates responded incorrectly on 11 more occasions before the experiment was over. The question was how often the participant would forsake what he knew to be the correct answer and conform to the incorrect judgment given by everyone else. Here there was no ambiguity as there was in Sherif's experiment: the right answer was clear. (When participants in a control group made these judgments by themselves, with no social pressure, they almost never made a mistake.)

As Asch predicted, there was less conformity in his study than in Sherif's, but the rate of caving in to the group was still surprisingly high. Three-quarters of the participants conformed to the group's incorrect answer at least once. Overall,



SOLOMON ASCH
A pioneer of conformity research, Asch studied the effect of normative social influence.

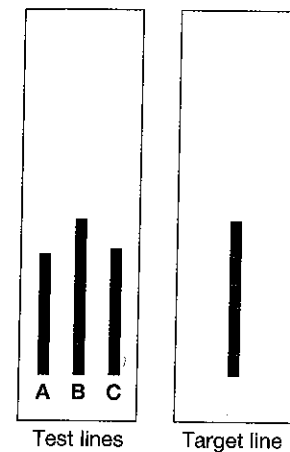


FIGURE 9.4
NORMATIVE SOCIAL INFLUENCE
Participants in Asch's conformity study had a difficult time understanding why everyone appeared to be seeing things incorrectly. Even though it was clear to them what the right answer was, they ended up going along with the erroneous majority a third of the time.
Source: Adapted from Asch, 1956.

participants conformed on a third of the critical trials. These results aren't simply surprising; they are disturbing as well. We like to think of people, ourselves especially, as sticking to what we think is right rather than following the herd (Pronin, Berger, & Molouki, 2007). In addition, we worry about people abandoning the dictates of their own conscience to follow others into wrongheaded or potentially destructive behavior.

There is undoubtedly some *informational* social influence, discussed in the previous section, at work in Asch's experiment: the incorrect judgments called out by the majority were for lines that were only 0.5–0.75 inch off the correct answer, so some participants may have questioned their own judgment and regarded the confederates' responses as reliable sources of information. However, control participants who were not subject to social pressure got the answer right nearly 100 percent of the time, so there wasn't much uncertainty about the correct response. Thus, informational social influence was not the main cause of conformity. The primary reason people conformed was to avoid standing out negatively in the eyes of the group (Box 9.1, see p. 278). Social psychologists refer to this kind of influence as **normative social influence**—the desire to avoid being criticized, disapproved of, or shunned (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955).

People are often reluctant to depart from the norms of society, or at least the norms of the groups they care most about, because they fear the social consequences (Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991). The normative social pressures in Asch's experiment were sufficiently intense that the participants found themselves in a wrenching dilemma: "Should I say what I truly think it is? But what would everyone else think if I gave a different response? They all agree, and they all seem so confident. Will they think I'm nuts? Will they interpret my disagreement as a

normative social influence The influence of other people that comes from the desire to avoid their disapproval and other social sanctions (ridicule, barbs, ostracism).

Bulimia and Social Influence

Why do so many young women engage in binge eating and then purging by vomiting or using laxatives? The phenomenon is relatively new. This sort of behavior, an eating disorder known as bulimia, was virtually unheard of until about 45 years ago. Has it become more common because the fashion industry and media have persuaded women to want to be thinner than is natural or healthy (see Chapter 10)? Is it because body image and self-esteem have worsened?

Such factors may play a role in the current epidemic of bulimia, but another factor is simple social influence. Christian Crandall (1988) studied sorority women at a large university and found that the more bulimic a woman's friends were, the more bulimic she was likely to be. As Crandall learned, this relationship wasn't because bulimic women discovered each other and became friends. Early in the school year, when the students had known one another for only a short time, there was no association between the level of a woman's bulimia and that of her friends. But over the course of the year, women in established friendship groups (not different, newly formed groups) came to have similar levels of bulimia.

Crandall studied two sororities and found two slightly different patterns of influence. In one sorority, women who differed in their level of bulimic activity from the average level in their sorority were less likely to be popular. Crandall inferred from this that there was an "appropriate," or normative, level of bulimia in that sorority, and deviations from it in either direction were punished

by rejection. In the other sorority, more binge eating (up to quite a large amount) was associated with more popularity. In that sorority, Crandall concluded, there was pressure toward considerable binge eating, and those most inclined to binge were rewarded with acceptance and popularity. The lesson, once again, is that social influence is everywhere, even influencing whether or not we're likely to suffer from chronic medical conditions.



THINNESS AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE When some members of a sorority engage in binge eating and purging to stay thin, pressures on other members of the sorority to do likewise can be intense.

slap in the face? But what kind of person am I if I go along with them? What the #@!\$% should I do?"

To get an idea of the intensity of the participants' dilemma, imagine the following scenario. As part of a discussion of Asch's experiment, your social psychology professor shows an image of the target line and the three test lines and reports that although the right answer is line B, the confederates all say it's C. As your professor begins to move on, one student raises his hand and announces with conviction, "But the right answer is C!"

What would happen? Probably everyone would chuckle, making the charitable assumption that the student was trying to be funny. But if the student continued to insist that the confederates' answer was correct, the chuckles would turn to awkward, nervous laughter, and everyone would turn toward the professor in an implicit plea to "make this awkward situation go away." In subsequent lectures, people might avoid sitting by the nonconformist, and lunch invitations, dating opportunities, and offers to join a study group would likely diminish as well. Negative social repercussions like these are what Asch's participants likely felt they risked if they departed from the majority's response. Perhaps it's no

surprise, then, that participants so often chose not to take the risk and conformed to the majority response (Janes & Olson, 2000; Kruglanski & Webster, 1991; Levine, 1989; Schachter, 1951).

Factors Affecting Conformity Pressure

Several generations of researchers have examined a number of variables that influence the tendency to conform. These include the characteristics of the group; the surrounding context, including cultural influences; and the task or issue at hand. (See **Box 9.2** on p. 280 for another determinant of people's readiness to conform.) This research has provided a clearer understanding of when people are especially likely to conform and when they're less likely to do so. Both informational and normative social influences are powerful forces: as either one intensifies, so does the rate of conformity.

GROUP SIZE It's probably no surprise that people are more likely to conform to a bigger group. What *is* surprising, perhaps, is that the effect of group size levels off pretty quickly (**Figure 9.5**). Research using Asch's paradigm, for example, has shown an increase in conformity as the size of the group increases, but only to a group size of three or four; after that, the amount of conformity levels off (Campbell & Fairey, 1989; Gerard, Wilhelmy, & Conolley, 1968; Insko, Smith, Alicke, Wade, & Taylor, 1985; Rosenberg, 1961).

When we consider informational social influence, it makes sense that the larger the number of people who express a particular opinion, the more likely that opinion has merit as a source of information—but only to a certain point. The validity of a consensus opinion increases only if the individual opinions are independent of one another. The more people there are, the less likely it is that their views are independent; therefore, additional consenting opinions don't offer any additional real information.

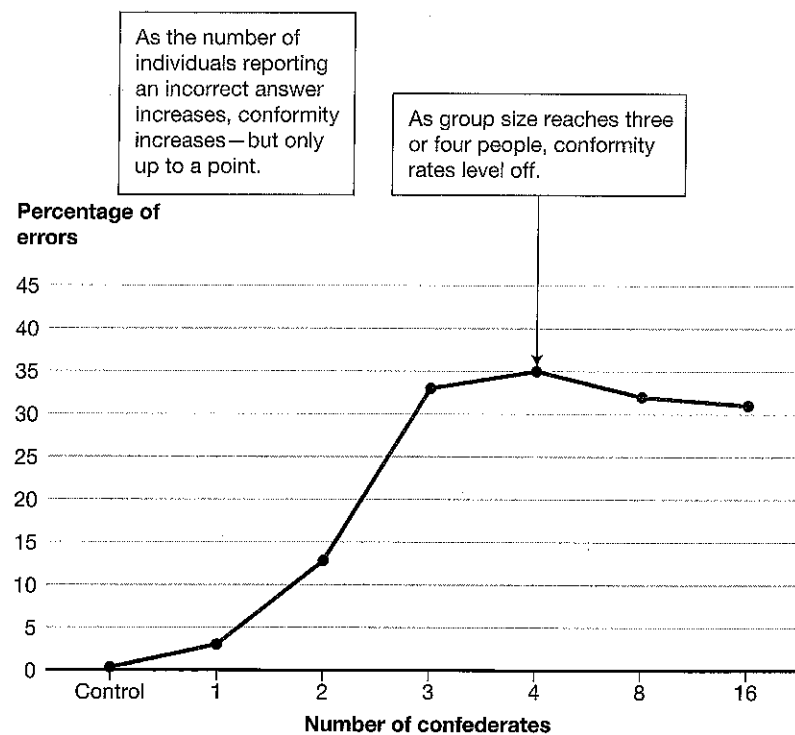


FIGURE 9.5
THE EFFECT OF GROUP SIZE ON CONFORMITY
As the number of people in a majority increases, so does the tendency to conform, but only up to a unanimous majority of three or four. After that, conformity levels off.
Source: Adapted from Asch, 1951.

"The way to get along, I was told when I entered Congress, 'is to go along.'"

—JOHN F. KENNEDY

"It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but just as much to stand up to our friends."

—ALBUS DUMBLEDORE, IN HARRY POTTER AND THE SORCERER'S STONE



BOX 9.2

Not So Fast: Critical Thinking about Conformity and Construal

A common reaction upon learning about Asch's experiment is to think, "Wow, if people conform that much to a group of strangers, imagine how much they'd conform to the judgments of those they care about and have to continue to deal with in the future!" Indeed, it is true that normative social influence is diminished in situations, like Asch's, where people care less about others' judgments because everyone is a stranger and they all assume they'll never see one another again (Lott & Lott, 1961; Wolf, 1985).

Yet there are other, more subtle aspects of Asch's procedure that can lead to more conformity than usually occurs in daily life. Participants in Asch's experiment faced a double whammy. First, they had to confront the fact that everyone else saw things differently than they did. Second, they had no basis for understanding why everyone else saw things differently. ("Could I be mistaken? No, it's as plain as day. Could they be mistaken? I don't see how, because they're not any farther away than I am and it's so clear. Are they unusual? No, they don't look much different from me or anyone else.")

If we can pinpoint a reason for why our opinions are different ("They don't see things the way I do because they're wearing distorting glasses"), both informational influence and normative social influence are lessened. Informational social influence is reduced because the explanation for the difference of opinion can diminish the group's impact as a source of information ("They're biased"). Normative social influence is reduced because we can assume that those in the majority are aware of why we differ from them. For instance, if we have different views on some burning political issue of the day, those we disagree with might think we're biased, selfish, or have different values, but at least they won't think we're crazy. In Asch's situation, in contrast, the participants faced the reasonable fear that if they departed from everyone else's judgment, their behavior would look truly bizarre, and everyone would think they were nuts.

The broader lesson here is about the importance of construal, even in the context of experiments. As we have stressed throughout this book, people respond

not to the objective situations they face, but to their subjective interpretations of those situations. Participants in Asch's study were in a situation in which it was unusually hard to develop a compelling interpretation of what was going on. It's hard to act independently and decisively when things have stopped making sense, so it may be a mistake to assume that Asch's participants would conform even more outside the psychology lab (Ross, Bierbrauer, & Hoffman, 1976).

To understand the real meaning of any experiment, it's important to pay attention to how the participants might have interpreted the instructions, procedures, and stimuli they faced. The same is true for experimenters. They must pay attention to the meaning the participants are apt to give their experience in the lab in order to design studies that constitute truly informative tests of their hypotheses. Running participants in experiments isn't the same as running rats in mazes: people don't passively record and respond to the surrounding context; they actively construe it and respond to what they've construed.

As for normative social influence, it makes sense that the larger the group, the more people one stands to displease, so conformity is more likely. But here, too, the impact of group size is seen only up to a point. A person can feel only so much embarrassment, and the difference between being viewed as odd, foolish, or difficult by 2 versus 4 people is psychologically much more powerful than the difference between being viewed that way by, say, 12 versus 14 people.

GROUP UNANIMITY A striking effect was observed in Asch's original studies when the group was not entirely unanimous. Recall that in the basic paradigm, the participant went along and reported the wrong answer a third of the time. That figure dropped to 5 percent when the true participant had an ally—that is, when just one other member of the group deviated from the majority (Figure 9.6). This effect occurs because the presence of an ally weakens both informational social

influence ("Maybe I'm not crazy after all") and normative social influence ("At least I've got someone to stand by me"). This effect suggests a powerful tool for protecting independence of thought and action: if you expect to be pressured to conform and want to remain true to your beliefs, bring along an ally. Indeed, an important subtext of Asch's research is just how hard it can be to go it alone. People can stand up to misguided peers, but they usually need some help. Being the lone dissenter can be agonizingly difficult.

Note that the other person who breaks the group's unanimity doesn't need to offer the correct answer—just something that departs from the group's answer. Suppose the right answer is the shortest of the three lines, and the majority claims it's the longest. If the fellow dissenter states that it's the middle line, it still reduces the rate of conformity even though the participant's own view (that it's the shortest line) hasn't been reinforced. What matters is the break in unanimity. This fact has important implications for free speech. It suggests that we might want to tolerate loathsome and obviously false statements ("The Holocaust never happened"; "The World Trade Center attacks were a government hoax")

not because what is said has any value, but because it liberates *other people* to make atypical remarks that *are* of value. The presence of voices, even bizarre or patently wrongheaded voices, that depart from conventional opinion frees the body politic to speak out and thus can foster productive political discourse.

ANONYMITY If standing up to a misguided majority is hard, what happens when people can register dissent without calling attention to themselves? In other words, what happens when the response is anonymous? Anonymity eliminates normative social influence and therefore should substantially reduce conformity. Indeed, when the true participants in Asch's paradigm are allowed to write their judgments on a piece of paper instead of having to say them aloud for the group to hear, conformity drops dramatically. When nobody else is aware of your judgment, there is no need to fear the group's disapproval.

This effect highlights an important distinction between the impact of informational and normative social influence. Informational social influence, by guiding how we come to see the issues or stimuli before us, leads to **internalization**, or the private acceptance of the position advanced by the majority (Kelman, 1958). We don't just mimic a particular response—we adopt the group's perspective. Normative social influence, in contrast, often has a greater impact on public compliance than on private acceptance. That is, to avoid disapproval, we sometimes do or say one thing but continue to believe another.

EXPERTISE AND STATUS Suppose you were a participant in Asch's experiment, and the other participants who were inexplicably stating what you thought was the wrong answer were all former major-league batting champions. If you proceeded on the assumption that a player can't lead the league in hitting without exceptional eyesight, you'd probably grant the group considerable authority and go along with the group's opinion. In contrast, if the rest of the group were all wearing thick eyeglasses, you'd be less apt to take their opinions seriously.

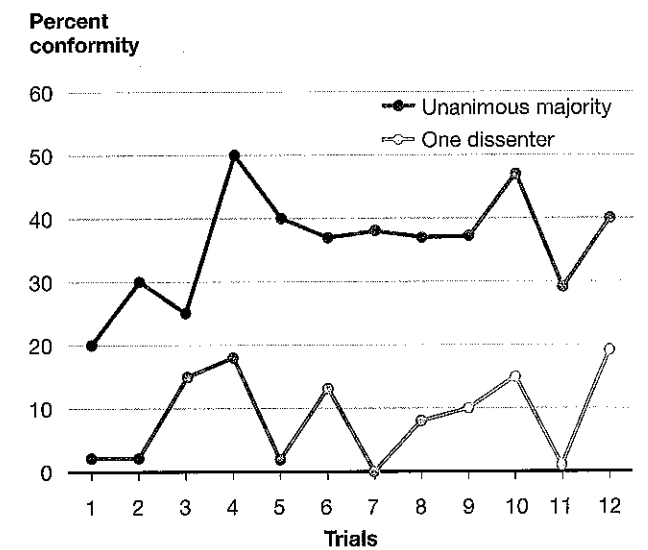


FIGURE 9.6
THE EFFECT OF GROUP UNANIMITY ON CONFORMITY
The tendency for people to go along with a misguided majority drops precipitously once there's a break in the majority, when there is just one other person willing to dissent.
Source: Adapted from Asch, 1956.

"If there is any principle of the Constitution that more imperatively calls for attachment than any other it is the principle of free thought—not free thought for those who agree with us but freedom for the thought that we hate."

—OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

internalization Private acceptance of a proposition, orientation, or ideology.

As this thought experiment illustrates, the expertise and status of the group members powerfully influence the rate of conformity. Expertise and status often go together, because we grant greater status to those with expertise, and we often assume (not always correctly) that those with high status are experts (Koslowsky & Schwarzwald, 2001). To the extent that these characteristics can be separated, however, expertise primarily affects informational social influence. Experts are more likely to be right, so we take their opinions more seriously as sources of information. Status, in contrast, mainly affects normative social influence. The disapproval of high-status individuals can hurt more than the disapproval of people we care less about.

Many researchers have examined the effect of expertise and status on conformity (Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Crano, 1970; Ettinger, Marino, Endler, Geller, & Natziuk, 1971). One of the most intriguing studies of status used a paradigm quite different from Asch's. Torrance (1955) gave the members of navy bombing crews—pilot, navigator, and gunner—a number of reasoning problems, such as this horse-trading problem:

A man bought a horse for \$60 and then sold it for \$70. He later repurchased the horse for \$80 and then, changing his mind yet again, sold it for \$90. How much money did he make on his series of transactions? (For the correct answer, see page 284.)

The crew then had to report one answer for the whole group. Torrance monitored the group's deliberations and found that if the pilot (who generally held the highest status) originally came up with the correct solution, the group eventually reported it as their answer 91 percent of the time. If the navigator offered the correct answer, the group ended up reporting the correct answer 80 percent of the time. But if the lowly gunner offered the correct answer, the group offered it up only 63 percent of the time. The opinions of higher-status individuals thus tend to carry more weight (Foushee, 1984).

CULTURE As we emphasize throughout this book, people from interdependent cultures are much more concerned about their relationships with others and about fitting into the broader social context than people from independent cultures. People reared in interdependent cultures are therefore likely to be more susceptible to both informational social influence (they consider the actions and opinions of others very telling) and normative social influence (they consider the high regard of others very important). Thus, people from interdependent cultures might be expected to conform more than those from independent cultures.

Evidence supports this contention. An analysis of the results of 133 experiments using the Asch paradigm in 17 countries found that conformity does indeed tend to be greater in interdependent countries (Bond & Smith, 1996). The individualism that is highly valued in American and Western European societies has given individuals in those independent cultures a greater willingness to stand apart from the majority.



EXPERTISE, STATUS, AND SOCIAL INFLUENCE

When the United States was preparing to invade Iraq to unseat Saddam Hussein and secure his putative weapons of mass destruction in March 2003, the government sent Secretary of State Colin Powell to speak to the delegates of the United Nations because he had great credibility. Powell presented the case for the U.S. government's contention that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, hoping to convince the delegates of the need to invade Iraq.

TIGHT AND LOOSE CULTURES Michele Gelfand and her colleagues have pursued a distinction between cultures that overlaps somewhat with the independence-interdependence dimension but differs enough that it deserves a name of its own: tightness versus looseness (Gelfand et al., 2011). Conformity to social norms lies at the heart of this construct. Some cultures, which Gelfand calls “tight,” have strong norms regarding how people should behave and don't tolerate departure from those norms. Other cultures are “loose”: their norms aren't as strong, and their members tolerate more deviance.

In a highly ambitious study, the Gelfand team examined a number of variables in 33 nations (Gelfand et al., 2011). They found that compared with loose nations, tight nations are more likely to have governments that are autocratic or dictatorial, to punish dissent, to have sharp controls on what can be said in the media, to have more laws and higher monitoring to ensure that the laws are obeyed, and to inflict more punishment for disobedience. If a nation was tight on one of these dimensions, it tended to be tight on all; if it was loose on one, it tended to be loose on all. Tight countries include India, Germany, People's Republic of China, South Korea, Japan, Austria, Portugal, Britain, Turkey, and Italy. Loose countries include Greece, Hungary, Israel, the Netherlands, Ukraine, New Zealand, and Brazil. You probably guessed that the United States is relatively loose, which it is—on the whole. But there's great variation across America's 50 states on almost everything, including how tight or loose they are. California, Nevada, and Maine are rather loose, whereas Mississippi, Kansas, and Texas are rather tight (Harrington & Gelfand, 2014).

Gelfand and her colleagues surveyed people in each of the 33 countries, asking them about the appropriateness of arguing, crying, laughing, singing, flirting, reading a newspaper, and several other behaviors in each of 15 different social situations or places, such as a doctor's office, a restaurant, and a movie theater (Gelfand et al., 2011). The tighter the nation's laws and norms, the fewer behaviors were allowed in these various situations. The researchers also asked people if their country had many social norms, whether others would strongly disapprove if someone acted inappropriately, and so forth. Citizens in tighter nations pointed to tighter constraints.



TIGHT VS. LOOSE CULTURES

(A) As this picture of Chinese girls lined up for school illustrates, some cultures are relatively tight; they have strong norms about how people should behave and tolerate very little leeway in deviating from those norms. (B) Other cultures are relatively loose; their norms aren't as stringent, as this more chaotic line indicates.

**Answer to Horse Problem
on p. 282**

\$20.

Amount paid = \$140 (\$60 + \$80).

Amount received = \$160 (\$70 + \$90).

Why are some nations tight and some loose? The Gelfand team found that tighter nations tend to have higher population densities, fewer natural resources, unreliable food supplies, less access to safe water, greater risk of natural disasters, more territorial threats from neighbors, and a higher prevalence of pathogens (Gelfand et al., 2011). It appears, then, that behavioral constraints are associated with, and perhaps partly caused by, ecological constraints.

GENDER If there are cultural differences in conformity behavior, should we expect gender differences as well? Perhaps. There are significant differences in how various cultures socialize boys and girls, but they have one thing in common: they all sex-type to some degree. Women are raised to value interdependence and to nurture important social relationships more than men are, whereas men are raised to value autonomy and independence more than women are. So we might expect women to be more subject to social influence and thus to conform more than men do.

Reviews of the literature on gender differences in conformity have shown that women tend to conform more than men—but only a bit (Bond & Smith, 1996; Eagly, 1987; Eagly & Carli, 1981; Eagly & Chrvala, 2006). The difference in conformity tends to be greatest when the situation involves face-to-face contact, as in Asch's original study. However, the difference also seems to be strongly influenced by the specific content of the issue at hand. As we have seen, people tend to conform when they're confused by the events unfolding around them or the topic under discussion. For instance, if you're like most people, you know more about sandwiches than the periodic table, so you're less likely to conform to other people when they assert that the most important ingredient in a good sandwich is horseradish than when they assert that the atomic number of beryllium is 62.

Analyses of the specific contexts in which men and women differ in the tendency to conform reveal just this effect: that you are more likely to conform in areas where you feel less confident (Sistrunk & McDavid, 1971). Thus, women tend to conform more in stereotypically male domains (on questions about geography or deer hunting, for instance), whereas men tend to conform more in stereotypically female domains (such as questions about child rearing or relationship advice). It should be no surprise, then, that overall, women and men tend to differ in conformity, but only slightly.

The Influence of Minority Opinion on the Majority

There was a time in the United States when people owned slaves, when women weren't allowed to vote, and when children worked long hours for scandalously low pay in unhealthy conditions. But small groups of abolitionists, suffragettes, and child welfare advocates saw things differently than their peers. They worked tirelessly to change public opinion about each of these issues—and they succeeded. In each case the broader public changed its views, and important legislation was passed. Minority opinion became the majority opinion. One of the most dramatic examples of minority influence in the West is quite recent. Over the past 20 years, the acceptance of same-sex marriage has gone from a small minority to a majority today.

Examples like these are reminders that although conformity pressures can be powerful, majority opinion doesn't always prevail. It's possible to resist

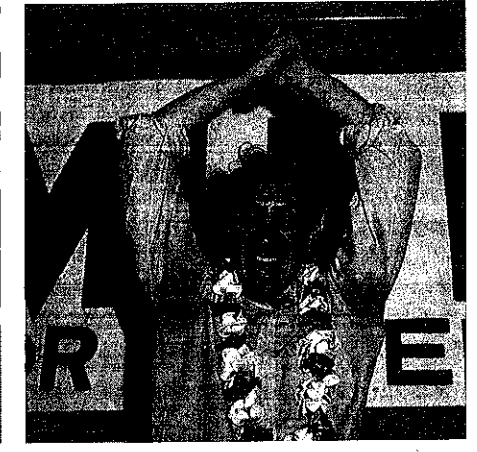
conformity pressure, and minority voices are sometimes loud enough to change the prevailing norms. How do minority opinions come to influence the majority? Are the sources of influence the same as those that majorities bring to bear on minorities?

In the first experimental examination of these questions, Serge Moscovici and his colleagues had groups of participants call out whether a color was green or blue (Moscovici, Lage, & Naffrechoux, 1969). The border between blue and green isn't always clear, but the critical stimuli the participants saw were ones that, when tested alone, participants nearly always thought were blue (99 percent of the time). The experimenter showed participants these stimuli in a setting in which they could hear one another's responses, including those of a minority group of respondents (confederates of the study) who all responded alike. When the confederates varied their responses randomly between "green" and "blue," the participants said "green" after the confederates did so only 1 percent of the time, about the same as when participants responded alone. But when the confederates responded with "green" consistently, the participants responded with "green" 8 percent of the time.

The influence of the consistent minority showed up in other ways as well. When the participants thought the study was over, the experimenter introduced them to a second investigator. This second investigator showed participants a series of blue-green colors and recorded where each participant, individually, thought blue left off and green began. Those who had earlier been exposed to a consistent minority now identified more of these stimuli as green; their sense of the border between blue and green had shifted. Thus, when the minority opinion was consistent, it had both a direct effect on participants' responses in the public setting and a latent effect on their subsequent private judgments.

Further investigations of minority influence have shown that minorities have their effect primarily through informational social influence rather than through normative social influence (Moscovici, 1985; Nemeth, 1986; Wood, Lundgren,

*"Give me a firm place to stand
and I will move the world."*
—ARCHIMEDES OF SYRACUSE



MINORITY INFLUENCE ON THE MAJORITY

Minority opinions can influence the majority through consistent and clear messages that persuade the majority to systematically examine and reevaluate its opinions. (A) British suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst presented her views in favor of women's right to vote to an American crowd in 1918. (B) Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat at the front of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in December 1955. Her actions resulted in a citywide bus boycott that eventually led the U.S. Supreme Court to declare that segregation was illegal on the city bus system. (C) Harvey Milk was the first openly gay person to be elected to public office in California. His activism contributed to the much greater support for the civil rights of gay and lesbian individuals that we see today.

Ouellette, Busceme, & Blackstone, 1994). People in the majority are typically not terribly concerned about the social costs of stating their opinion out loud—they have the majority on their side and normative social influence is minimized. But they might wonder why the minority keeps stating its divergent opinion. This can lead the majority to consider the stimulus more carefully, resulting in a level of scrutiny and systematic thought that can produce genuine change in attitudes and beliefs. Thus, majorities typically elicit more conformity, but it is often of the public compliance sort. In contrast, minorities typically influence fewer people, but the nature of the influence is often deeper and results in true private attitude change (Maass & Clark, 1983).

← LOOKING BACK

Conformity can be a response to implicit or explicit social pressure, and it can be the result of automatic mimicry, informational social influence, or normative social influence. Group size influences conformity, but it appears to reach maximum effect at around four people. Unanimity is also crucial in conformity, and a single ally can help an individual hold out against the group. People conform more to those with high status or expertise, and they conform more when they must express their opinions publicly rather than register them in private. People from interdependent cultures conform more than people from independent cultures, and women conform slightly more than men. Conformity pressures notwithstanding, minorities often make an impact, primarily through informational social influence.

Compliance

You need a favor from a friend. How should you ask? You're trying to raise funds for a favorite charity. How should you go about getting people to donate their hard-earned money? Your first job out of college is in sales. How do you get people to sign on the dotted line? These are all questions about compliance: getting people to comply with something you want. Coming from the other direction, how can you avoid being influenced by the compliance attempts of others? What techniques should you watch out for? Social psychologists have studied different strategies for eliciting compliance, and their research findings help explain how—and how effectively—these strategies work (Cialdini, 2008, 2016; Goldstein, Martin, & Cialdini, 2008).

There are three basic types of compliance approaches: those directed at the head, those directed at the heart, and those based on the power of norms (which, given the impact of informational and normative influences, appeal to both the head and the heart). People can be led to comply with requests because they see good reasons for doing so, because their emotions compel them to do so, or because everyone else is doing so. Of course, these types of influence aren't always neatly separable, and many compliance efforts are a blend of the three.

Reason-Based Approaches

We often make decisions by weighing the pros and cons—by tabulating the reasons for and against different options and choosing the one with the most favorable balance of good and bad. Some attempts to influence other people are targeted at changing their decision calculus. Reason-based approaches aim to convince people that they would be better off choosing a particular course of action.

NORM OF RECIPROCITY When someone does something for us, we usually feel compelled to do something in return. Indeed, all societies that have ever been studied possess a powerful **norm of reciprocity**, according to which people are expected to provide benefits for those who provided benefits for them (Fiske, 1991; Gouldner, 1960). This norm also exists in many bird and mammal species. When one monkey removes parasites from another's back, the latter typically returns the favor, thus helping cement the social bond between them.

When someone does you a favor, you have a tacit obligation to agree to any reasonable request that person might make in turn. To fail to respond is to violate a powerful social norm and run the risk of social condemnation (Cotterell, Eisenberger, & Speicher, 1992). Indeed, the English language is rich in derogatory terms for those who don't uphold their end of the bargain: *sponge*, *moocher*, *bum*, *deadbeat*, *ingrate*, *parasite*, *bloodsucker*, *leech*. If you do a favor for someone, that person will probably agree to a reasonable request you subsequently make, to avoid being seen as a moocher. This may be why restaurant customers often leave larger tips when the server gives them a piece of candy (Strohmetz, Rind, Fisher, & Lynn, 2002).

The influence of the norm of reciprocity in getting someone to comply was demonstrated in a simple experiment in which two people were asked to rate a number of paintings, supposedly as part of a study of aesthetics (D. Regan, 1971; see also Burger, Sanchez, Imberi, & Grande, 2009; Whatley, Webster, Smith, & Rhodes, 1999). One was a real participant; the other was a confederate of the experimenter. In one condition, the confederate returned from a break with two sodas and offered one to the participant. "I asked (the experimenter) if I could get myself a Coke, and he said it was OK, so I bought one for you, too." In another condition, the confederate returned empty-handed. Later, the confederate asked the participant for a favor. He explained that he was selling raffle tickets; the prize was a new car, and he'd win \$50 if he sold the most tickets. He then proceeded to ask if the participant was willing to buy any tickets for 25 cents apiece: "Any would help, the more the better." (To make sure all participants had the means to purchase some tickets, they had already been paid—in quarters—for participating in the study.)

In a testament to the power of the norm of reciprocity, participants who earlier had been given a soda by the confederate bought twice as many raffle tickets as those who had not (or those who had been given a soda by the experimenter, to control for the possibility that simply receiving a

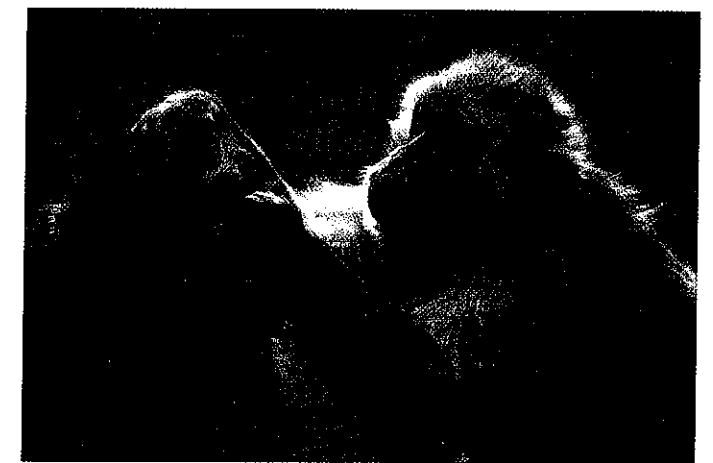
norm of reciprocity A norm dictating that people should provide benefits to those who benefit them.

"All contacts among men rest on the schema of giving and returning the equivalent."

—GEORG SIMMEL, GERMAN SOCIOLOGIST

"There is no duty more indispensable than that of returning a kindness."

—CICERO



RECIPROCITY AND GROOMING AMONG MAMMALS

Reciprocity helps promote group living and reduce aggression, as evidenced by grooming in macaques. They abide by the rule "You scratch my back and I'll scratch yours." Macaque A is more likely to groom macaque B than a random other macaque if macaque B has previously groomed macaque A.

soda, and perhaps being in a good mood as a result, is what had increased compliance).

Thus, doing a favor for someone creates an uninvited debt that the recipient is obligated to repay. Businesses and other organizations often try to take advantage of this pressure by preceding their request with a small gift: Insurance agents give out calendars or return-address labels. Marketers who want us to complete a survey send it along with a dollar. Cult members offer a flower before giving their pitch. Sometimes our hearts can sink when we see these gifts coming, and we often go to great lengths to avoid them, recognizing the obligations they bring.

THE RECIPROCAL CONCESSIONS (DOOR-IN-THE-FACE) TECHNIQUE Robert Cialdini, social psychology's most innovative contributor to the literature on compliance, has explored a novel application of the norm of reciprocity. The inspiration for his research on the subject is best introduced in his own words:

I was walking down the street when I was approached by an eleven- or twelve-year-old boy. He introduced himself and said that he was selling tickets to the annual Boy Scouts circus to be held on the upcoming Saturday night. He asked if I wished to buy any at five dollars apiece. Since one of the last places I wanted to spend Saturday evening was with the Boy Scouts, I declined. "Well," he said, "if you don't want to buy any tickets, how about buying some of our big chocolate bars? They're only a dollar each." I bought a couple and, right away, realized that something noteworthy had happened. I knew that to be the case because: (a) I do not like chocolate bars; (b) I do like dollars; (c) I was standing there with two of his chocolate bars; and (d) he was walking away with two of my dollars. (Cialdini, 1984, p. 47)

Cialdini's experience with the Boy Scout led him to articulate a general compliance technique whereby people feel compelled to respond to a concession by making a concession themselves (Cialdini et al., 1975; Feeley, Anker, & Aloe, 2012; O'Keefe & Hale, 1998, 2001; Reeves, Baker, Boyd, & Cialdini, 1991). First, you ask someone for a very large favor that will certainly be refused, and then you follow that request with one for a more modest favor that you are really interested in receiving. The idea is that the drop in the size of the request will be seen as a concession; the person being asked will feel compelled to match that concession to honor the norm of reciprocity. The most available concession the person can make is to comply with the asker's second request.

Another way of looking at this **reciprocal concessions technique** is that the first favor is so large and unreasonable that the target inevitably refuses, slamming the door in the face of that request but keeping it open just a crack for the subsequent, smaller request to get through. Accordingly, it's also known as the *door-in-the-face technique*.

Cialdini demonstrated the power of this technique in a field study in which members of his research team posed as representatives of the "County Youth Counseling Program" and approached students around campus. They asked individual students if they would be willing to chaperone a group of juvenile delinquents on a trip to the zoo. Not surprisingly, the overwhelming majority, 83 percent, refused. But the response rate was much different for a second group of students who had first encountered a much larger request. They were first asked whether they would be willing to counsel juvenile delinquents for 2 hours

a week for the next two years! Not surprisingly, all of them refused, at which point they were asked about chaperoning the trip to the zoo. Fifty percent of these students agreed to chaperone—triple the rate of the other group (Cialdini et al., 1975). A series of carefully crafted follow-up studies revealed that the pressure participants felt to comply to what was perceived as a concession (chaperone one trip to the zoo rather than provide counsel for the next two years) was responsible for the dramatic increase in compliance. Accordingly, this technique doesn't work when the two requests are made by different individuals. In that case, the second, smaller request isn't seen as a concession, but rather an entirely separate request by a different person, so the person being asked doesn't feel the same obligation.

THE FOOT-IN-THE-DOOR TECHNIQUE All of us perform certain actions because they're consistent with our self-image. Environmentalists take the time to recycle, even when sorely tempted to toss a bottle or can into the trash, because that's part of what it means to be an environmentalist. Skiers rise early to tackle fresh snow, even when they really want to hit the snooze button on the alarm clock, because that's what real skiing enthusiasts do. It's logical, therefore, that if requests are crafted to appeal to a person's self-image, the likelihood of compliance is increased.

One way to appeal to a person's self-image is to employ what's known as the **foot-in-the-door technique** (Burger & Guadagno, 2003; Dillard, Hunter, & Burgoon, 1984; Freedman & Fraser, 1966; Souchet & Girandola, 2013). It starts with a small request to which nearly everyone complies, thereby allowing the person making the request to get a foot in the door. This person then follows up with a larger request involving the real behavior of interest. The idea is that the initial agreement to the small request will lead to a change in the target person's self-image as someone who does this sort of thing or who contributes to such causes. That person then has a reason for agreeing to the subsequent, larger request: "It's just who I am."

In an early test of this technique, the investigators knocked on doors in a residential neighborhood and asked one group of homeowners if they would be willing to have a large billboard sign bearing the slogan "Drive Carefully" installed in their front yard for one week (Freedman & Fraser, 1966). They were shown a picture of the sign: it was large and unattractive, so not surprisingly, only 17 percent agreed to the request. Another group of residents was approached with a much smaller request—to display in a window of their home a 3-inch-square sign bearing the phrase "Be a Safe Driver." Virtually all of them agreed with the request. Two weeks later, when this group was asked to display the billboard in their yard (receiving the very same request as those in the first group), a staggering 76 percent of them agreed to do so.

You've probably heard politicians oppose a piece of legislation—not because there's anything wrong with the legislation itself, but because they think it might create a "slippery slope" leading to the passage of more questionable legislation

foot-in-the-door technique A compliance approach that involves making an initial small request with which nearly everyone complies, followed by a larger request involving the real behavior of interest.



THE FOOT-IN-THE-DOOR TECHNIQUE

After getting the customer to agree to a test drive, it may be easier for the salesperson to close the deal and have her buy the car.

reciprocal concessions technique A compliance approach that involves asking someone for a very large favor that will certainly be refused and then following that request with one for a smaller favor (which tends to be seen as a concession the target feels compelled to honor).

later on. Research on the foot-in-the-door technique suggests that there is merit to this concern. Human behavior, like a ball rolling down a sloping plane, is subject to momentum. Getting people started on something small often makes it easier to get them to do much bigger things down the road. We'll see just how powerful these slippery slopes can be when we discuss the most famous studies in all of social psychology later in this chapter.

Emotion-Based Approaches

Cognitive, or reason-based, approaches aim at the head and, as we have seen, can be very effective in obtaining compliance. Affective, or emotion-based, approaches aim at the heart, and they, too, are powerful tools for eliciting compliance.

POSITIVE MOOD Suppose you want to ask your dad for a new computer, a new amplifier for your guitar, or simply to borrow the family car for a road trip. When would you ask? When he's just come home from work in a foul mood, cursing his boss and his suffocating job? Or after he's just landed a promotion and a big raise? It doesn't take an advanced degree in psychology to know that it's better to request a favor when the person's in a good mood (Andrade & Ho, 2007). A positive mood makes people feel expansive and charitable, so they're more likely to agree to reasonable requests. Even little children know to wait before asking someone for a favor until that person seems cheerful.

The wisdom of this approach has been verified in countless experiments. In one study, participants received a telephone call from someone who claimed to

have spent her last dime on this very ("misdialed") call; she asked if they would dial a specified number and relay a message (Isen, Clark, & Schwartz, 1976). In one condition, shortly before receiving the call, participants were given a free sample of stationery to put them in a positive mood. In another condition, participants did not receive a free sample before the call. When the request was made of those without the free sample, only 10 percent complied. But the compliance rate shot up dramatically among participants who received the request a few minutes after receiving the gift. The compliance rate then declined gradually as the delay between receiving the gift and hearing the request increased (Figure 9.7).

A positive mood tends to increase compliance for two main reasons. First, our mood colors how

we interpret events. We're more likely to view requests for favors as less intrusive and less threatening when we're in a good mood. We're more inclined to give others the benefit of the doubt. For instance, when you're in a good mood, you're more likely to consider someone who asks to borrow your class notes to be a victim of circumstance who could get back on track with a little help rather than an irresponsible or lazy person who doesn't deserve to be bailed out (Carlson, Charlin, & Miller, 1988; Forgas, 1998a, 1998b; Forgas & Bower, 1987).

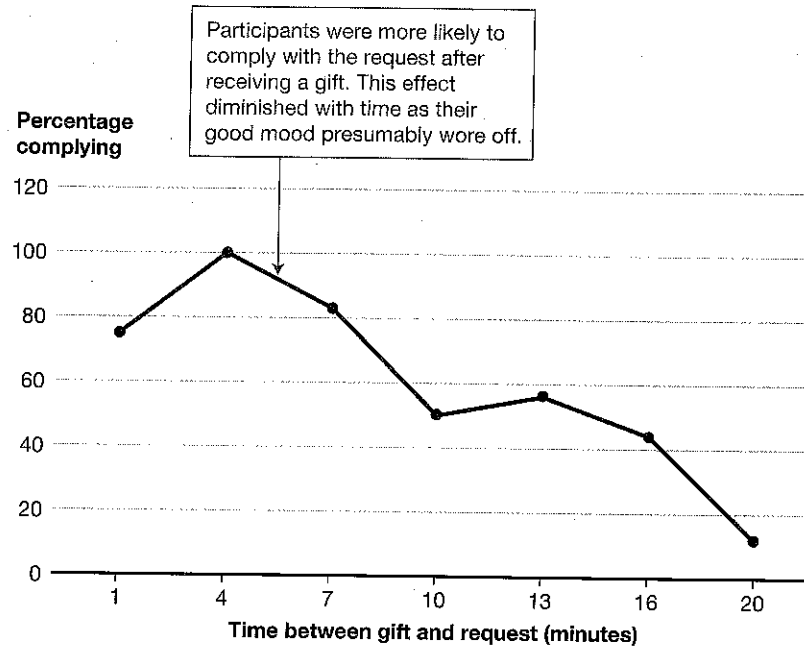


FIGURE 9.7
POSITIVE MOOD AND COMPLIANCE

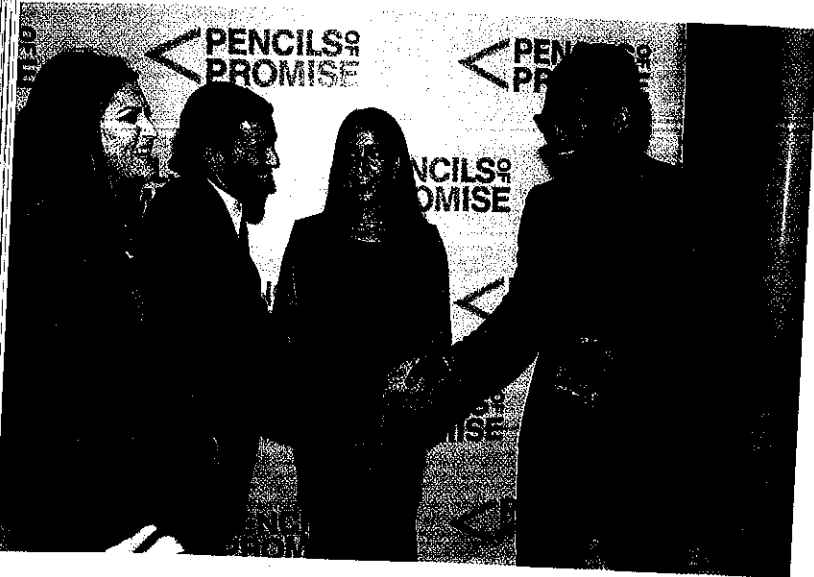
In this study, being in a good mood boosted participant compliance, with the effect slowly wearing off with the passage of time.

Source: Adapted from Isen, Clark, & Schwartz, 1976.

The second reason a positive mood tends to increase compliance involves what's known as mood maintenance. Pardon the tautology, but it feels good to feel good, and we typically want that feeling to last as long as possible (Clark & Isen, 1982; Wegener & Petty, 1994). One way to sustain a good mood is to do something for another person (Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008). Stated differently, one way to wreck a good mood is to turn down a request for a favor and invite all sorts of self-recrimination: "What kind of heartless person am I?"

Several studies have shown that wanting to maintain a good mood is an important component of the impact of a positive mood on compliance. In one experiment, some of the participants were first given cookies, which put them in a good mood; the others weren't given cookies. All of them were then asked (by someone other than the person who provided the cookies) if they'd be willing to assist with an experiment by serving as a confederate. Half the participants were told the job of confederate would involve *helping* the "true" participant in the experiment, and the other half were told it would involve *hindering* the participant. Having received a cookie (and being in a good mood) increased the compliance rate when the task involved helping the participant, but not when it involved hindering the participant. Helping another person promotes feeling good; hurting someone doesn't. Thus, while being in a good mood increases compliance, it does not do so when the act of compliance would undermine that good mood.

NEGATIVE MOOD If a good mood increases compliance, does a bad mood decrease it? It surely can (your dad is less likely to lend you the family car when he's mad at his boss), but even the slightest introspection reveals that certain types of bad moods are actually likely to *increase* compliance, not decrease it. Some people know this and use it to their advantage. Suppose, for example, your girlfriend was flirting with a classmate of yours, and you point out the offense. Would that be a good time to ask her for something? You bet it would!



POSITIVE MOOD AND REQUESTS

When people are in a good mood, they are more likely to agree to requests. Those attending this benefit for the charitable organization Pencils of Promise (and getting to shake Usher's hand) are therefore more likely to donate money to support the charity's efforts to build schools and expand educational opportunities around the globe.



NEGATIVE STATE RELIEF

Oskar Schindler (in the center) saved the lives of 1,200 Polish Jews during the Holocaust. Initially driven by the desire for easy profits, he took over a Jewish factory and ran it with cheap Jewish labor. Perhaps in a desire for negative state relief or from sheer humanitarianism, he used the millions he made from the cheap labor to bribe officials to save those who were slated for death. He is pictured here in Tel Aviv with some of those he saved and their descendants.

negative state relief hypothesis

The idea that people engage in certain actions, such as agreeing to a request, to relieve their negative feelings and feel better about themselves.

When people feel guilty, they're often motivated to do whatever they can to get rid of that awful feeling. And as we have seen, doing something for another makes us feel good and elevates our mood. So at least one type of bad mood, centered around guilt, should increase compliance.

Social psychologists have demonstrated a strong, positive association between guilt and compliance in many experiments. Participants have been led to feel guilty by being induced to lie, tricked into thinking they've broken a camera, or maneuvered into knocking over stacks of carefully arranged index cards (Carlsmith & Gross, 1969; Darlington & Macker, 1966; O'Keefe & Figgé, 1997; Regan, Williams, & Sparling, 1972). In a particularly clever study, researchers asked Catholics to donate to a charity when they were either on their way into

church for confession or on their way out (Harris, Benson, & Hall, 1975). The presumption was that those on their way in were rehearsing their sins and thus feeling guilty; those on their way out had done penance for their sins and were no longer plagued by guilt. As predicted, those solicited on the way in to church gave more money than those solicited on the way out.

Other types of bad moods, not just those produced by guilt, can also increase compliance. In one study, watching an adorable lab rat get "accidentally" jolted with an intense shock led participants to donate more money to charity than those who hadn't seen the unfortunate event (J. Regan, 1971). And in general it seems that bad moods sometimes increase compliance in part because we simply don't want to feel bad, and helping others makes us feel better, so we jump at the chance to brighten our mood. This is the **negative state relief hypothesis** in action, which says that taking an action to benefit someone else, especially when it's for a good cause, is one way to make ourselves feel better (Cialdini, Darby, & Vincent, 1973; Cialdini & Fultz, 1990; Cialdini et al., 1987). We often help others, in other words, to help ourselves.

A final word about the impact of moods, good and bad, on compliance. Investigators in Israel have found that if parole judges had just finished a meal before hearing a prisoner's plea for release from prison, there was a two-thirds chance they would vote for parole (Danziger, Levav, & Avnaim-Pesso, 2011). Cases that came up just before lunch, however, when the judges were hungry and presumably crankier, had precisely a zero chance for parole. A full stomach makes a difference, so hit your dad up for the car keys after dinner, not before.

Norm-Based Approaches

Adolescent girls exposed to pregnant peers are more likely to become pregnant themselves (Akerlof, Yellen, & Katz, 1996); planning for retirement is greatly influenced by coworkers' plans (Duflo & Saez, 2003); and student drinking is connected to student perceptions of how much other students drink (Lewis & Neighbors, 2004). The tendency to conform to people around us can be harnessed to achieve compliance with explicit requests or implicit suggestions.

"The best way to get people to do something is to tell them that their neighbors are already doing it."

—JOSHUA GREENE, PSYCHOLOGIST

Norm-based approaches to compliance are based on the power of social norms. They appeal to both the head and the heart.

EFFECTIVE NORM-BASED APPEALS Letting people know what others are doing can be used to advance the public good. Consider a norm-based approach to energy use that was instituted in California (Schultz, Nolan, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Griskevicius, 2007). Researchers left hang-tags on people's doors indicating their average daily residential energy use (in kilowatt-hours), as well as that of their neighbors. The effect of this simple intervention was clear-cut and immediate: those who consumed more energy than average altered their habits to significantly reduce their energy use.

What about the households that used *less* energy than average? Did telling them that their neighbors tended to be less conscientious make them more wasteful? Yes, it did. But the investigators had a simple remedy at hand that preserved the decrease in energy use among the energy wasters while avoiding increased energy use by the energy savers. The usage information given to half the households was accompanied by a small sign of approval or disapproval: a happy face for those who had used relatively little energy and a sad face for those who had used more than average. The signal of approval to the former was enough to maintain the superior conservation efforts of those who might otherwise have slacked off after hearing that their neighbors used more energy than they did (**Figure 9.8**). Used wisely, providing information about norms can be a powerful tool to promote energy conservation: giving consumers information about norms reduces energy consumption by the same amount as does raising the price of energy 10–20 percent.

Telling people about social norms is likely to be most effective when the information is surprising (when people have misunderstood the norm), such as when people overestimate the popularity of destructive behavior or underestimate the popularity of constructive behavior. Student drinking is a case in point. On campuses across the United States, students think that binge drinking is much

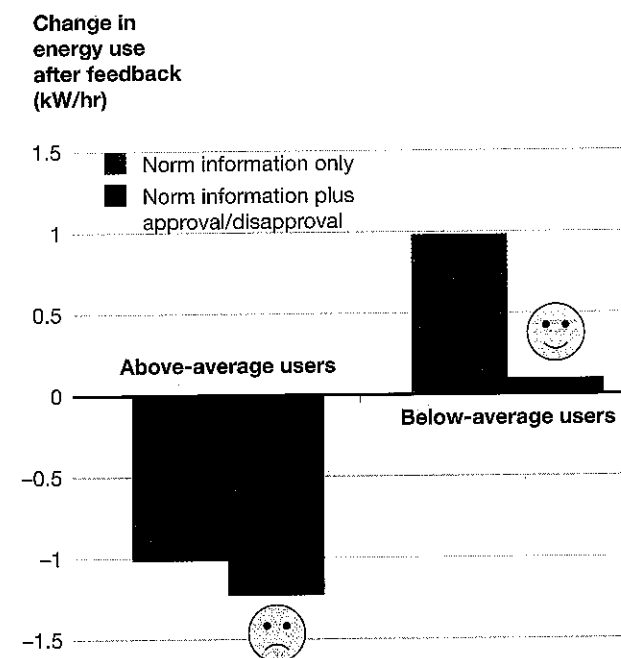


FIGURE 9.8
USING NORMS TO CONSERVE ENERGY

In this study, telling above-average energy consumers how much energy they use and how much the average household uses significantly reduced energy consumption (bars on the left). Providing this information to below-average energy consumers led to significantly greater energy consumption, unless it was accompanied by a simple symbol of approval (bars on the right). Source: Adapted from Schultz et al., 2007.

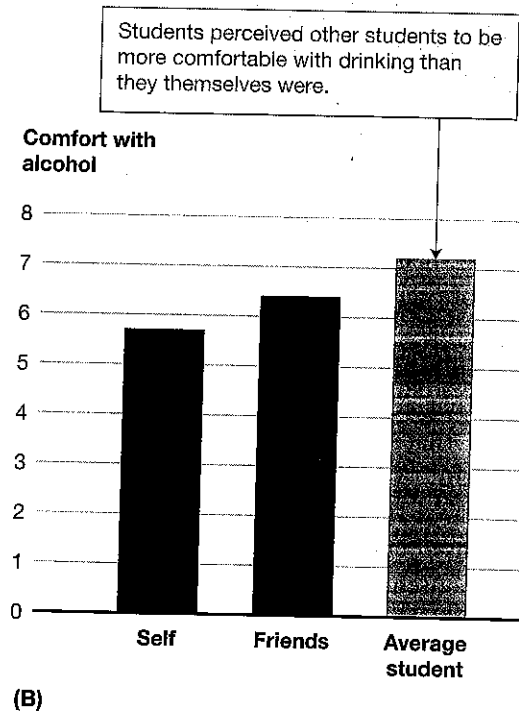


(A)

FIGURE 9.9
PLURALISTIC IGNORANCE

(A) University students believe drinking alcohol is more popular among their peers than it really is. Because of this belief, they censor their own reservations about drinking, thus furthering the illusion that alcohol is so popular. (B) These results show student ratings of their own and others' comfort with campus drinking habits at Princeton University.

Source: Part B adapted from Prentice & Miller, 1993.



(B)

more common than it actually is and that “teetotaling” or moderate drinking is much less common than it is (Perkins, Haines, & Rice, 2005). These beliefs represent examples of pluralistic ignorance (discussed in Chapter 4). In one study, Deborah Prentice and Dale Miller (1993) examined the discrepancy between private attitudes and public norms about alcohol use at Princeton University. Prentice and Miller asked Princeton undergraduates how comfortable they felt about campus drinking habits, as well as the comfort level of both their friends and the average undergraduate. If the students were suffering from pluralistic ignorance, they would indicate that they were less at ease with drinking than they supposed most students were. The results, shown in **Figure 9.9**, indicate that this is exactly what happened. Hidden discomfort with alcohol existed side by side with perceived popular support.

Prentice and Miller attributed the discrepancy to the visibility of drinking on campus:

The alcohol situation at Princeton is exacerbated by the central role of alcohol in many of the university’s institutions and traditions. For example, at the eating clubs, the center of social life on campus, alcohol is on tap 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Princeton reunions boast the second highest level of alcohol consumption for any event in the country after the Indianapolis 500. The social norms for drinking at the university are clear: students must be comfortable with alcohol use to partake of Princeton social life. (Prentice & Miller, 1993, p. 244)

Efforts to stem excessive alcohol consumption by providing students with accurate information about their peers’ drinking habits have proved to be quite effective (Neighbors, Larimer, & Lewis, 2004; Perkins & Craig, 2006; Schroeder and Prentice, 1998). In one study, students attending regularly scheduled club or organizational meetings typed into wireless keypads information about

their own drinking behavior and their beliefs about the drinking habits of their peers (LaBrie, Hummer, Neighbors, & Pedersen, 2008). Their aggregate responses were immediately projected for all to see, giving everyone information about actual drinking behavior on campus—and correcting widespread misunderstandings of how much and how often other students drink. In follow-up online surveys conducted one and two months later, students who received this information reported drinking significantly less than they had previously and less than students in a control group.

Similar norm-based approaches have been used to combat harassment and bullying in schools (Paluck & Shepherd, 2012; Shepherd, & Paluck, 2015). In one study, half of a group of 56 middle schools in New Jersey were randomly assigned to a social norm treatment condition in which a randomly selected group of students was asked to model opposition to the kinds of conflict and harassment that were common at their school (for example, speaking out when one student taunted or viciously teased another). The other schools served as controls. Disciplinary reports declined in the treatment schools by 30 percent relative to the control schools. As you might expect, some students were more effective than others at modeling anti-harassment norms, with the more popular students having a bigger effect on their peers’ beliefs about what sorts of conflicts are common or acceptable at their school (Paluck, Shepherd, & Aronow, 2016).

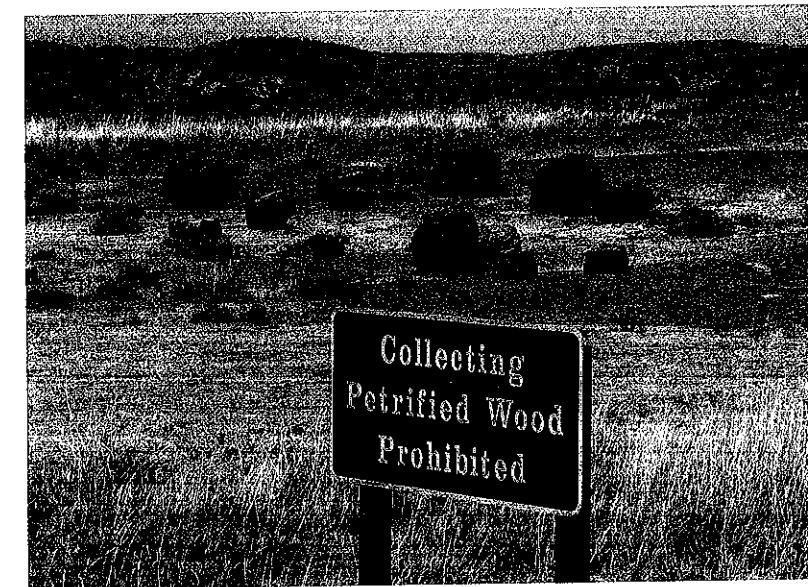
DESCRIPTIVE AND PRESCRIPTIVE NORMS In preparing norm-based compliance appeals, it’s important to be aware that there are two kinds of norms.

Descriptive norms are simply descriptions of what is typically done. **Prescriptive norms**, often called *injunctive norms*, are what one is supposed to do. Descriptive norms correspond to what *is*; prescriptive norms correspond to what *ought to be*. University administrators often say that students should get 8–9 hours of sleep each night (prescriptive norm), but most students sleep much less (descriptive norm).

To increase compliance, the two norms should not be placed in conflict with each other. A common mistake is to try to strengthen the pull of the prescriptive norm by stating how infrequently it is followed. “Isn’t it a shame that so few people . . .” vote in elections, eat a healthy diet, get screened for cancer—you name it. Making such an appeal seems sensible, but note that it highlights the unfortunate reality—the descriptive norm—as much or more than the prescriptive norm you want to promote (Sieverding, Decker, & Zimmermann, 2010; Stok, de Ridder, de Vet, & de Wit, 2014). By saying what a shame it is that so few people vote, you’re pointing out that few people vote. Given the power of descriptive norms, such information can actually make people *less* likely to vote, not more likely. Indeed, those involved in get-out-the-vote campaigns now realize, thanks to research by social psychologists, that it’s more effective to emphasize how many people vote, not how few (Gerber & Rogers, 2009).

descriptive norm The behavior exhibited by most people in a given context.

prescriptive norm The way a person is supposed to behave in a given context; also called *injunctive norm*.



DESCRIPTIVE AND PRESCRIPTIVE NORMS IN CONFLICT

By telling people they shouldn’t remove petrified wood from the Petrified National Forest (prescriptive norm), park officials are communicating that stealing wood is something people do (descriptive norm). This can increase the very action—theft—the authorities want to prevent.

Researchers conducted an ingenious investigation of this approach in the Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona, where visitors sometimes take samples of petrified wood home with them as souvenirs (Cialdini et al., 2006). If everyone took samples, of course, there would soon be no Petrified Forest to visit. To examine the most effective ways to deal with the problem, the investigators rotated different warning signs at various locations in the park. One sign included the usual emphasis on the severity of the problem, stating, "Many past visitors have removed petrified wood from the park, changing the state of the Petrified Forest," accompanied by photographs of visitors taking wood. An alternative sign was framed positively: "The vast majority of past visitors have left the petrified wood in the park, preserving the natural state of the Petrified Forest," with accompanying pictures of visitors admiring and photographing a piece of petrified wood. The investigators placed specially marked pieces of wood along trails near these signs and monitored how many of them were stolen over the course of the experiment. In a remarkable demonstration of the importance of aligning prescriptive and descriptive norms, the theft rate was over four times lower when the signs emphasized how *few* people take wood from the park.

LOOKING BACK

Reason-based approaches induce compliance by providing good reasons for people to agree to a request. The norm of reciprocity compels people to benefit those who have benefited them. In the reciprocal concessions (door-in-the-face) technique, people who have refused a large request are then induced to agree to a smaller request. In the foot-in-the-door technique, people comply with a small request and then are induced to grant a larger request. Emotion-based approaches also can lead to compliance. People who are in a positive mood are more likely to comply with a request in order to maintain their good mood. In contrast, according to the negative state relief hypothesis, people who feel guilty or sad are also likely to comply with a request in order to feel better. Norm-based approaches capitalize on people's tendencies to look to others for guidance. People are responsive to both descriptive and prescriptive norms, but it is important that norm-based appeals do not pit the two against each other.

Obedience to Authority

The study of when and why people obey the commands or instructions of someone in authority has been dominated by the most famous set of social psychology experiments ever conducted—those of Stanley Milgram (previously discussed in Chapters 1 and 5). Milgram's experiments are so well known, in fact, that the social psychologist Lee Ross says they "have become part of our society's shared intellectual legacy—that small body of historical incidents, biblical parables, and classic literature that serious thinkers feel free to draw on when they debate about human nature or contemplate human history" (Ross, 1988, p. 101).

The Setup of the Milgram Experiments

Milgram's research on obedience began as an investigation of conformity. Milgram was interested in whether the kind of pressures observed in Asch's conformity experiment were powerful enough to lead people to do something far more significant than report an incorrect line length. He wondered what would happen if he asked participants to deliver electric shocks whenever a subject performing a task (in reality the experimenter's confederate) responded incorrectly. Would participants conform to the example set by other obedient participants, even when doing so involved hurting another human being?

This is an interesting question, but Milgram never pursued it. The reason is that he first needed to obtain data from a control group to determine the willingness of participants to deliver electric shocks in the first place, when there was no pressure to conform (Evans, 1980). And that's where he got his surprising result—one that radically changed his research agenda. A large percentage of participants were willing to do something they thought was hurting another person, even when there was no group of other participants leading the way.

Recall from Chapter 1 the basic procedure of Milgram's experiments. After responding to a newspaper ad, participants showed up for an experiment on learning. The setup was rigged so the participant was always assigned to the role of the "teacher" and the confederate to the role of the "learner." The teacher's job was to administer an electric shock every time the learner—a genial, middle-aged man who was strapped into a chair with his arm attached to a pretend shock generator—made a mistake by reporting the wrong word from a list of word pairs (such as *glove/book*, *grill/detergent*, *anvil/pope*). Teachers



STANLEY MILGRAM

Using a shock generator that looked real but was actually just a prop, Milgram studied whether participants would continue to obey instructions and deliver electric shocks to a learner, even when they thought the learner was in grave distress.



THE MILGRAM EXPERIMENT

Participants were led to believe that the shock generator had 30 levels of shock, ranging from "slight shock" to "danger: severe shock" to "XXX." (A) A participant being given a sample shock of 45 volts (this was the only real shock in the experiment). (B) A participant standing up to ask the experimenter if he could stop the experiment.

were briefly strapped to the chair themselves and given a 45-volt shock so they would know the shocks were painful. The teacher started off by delivering 15 volts after the learner's first mistake, then increased the shock in 15-volt increments after each subsequent mistake. As the mistakes accumulated, participants found themselves required to deliver 255, 300, and 330 volts of electricity—all the way up to 450 volts. (In reality, no electric shock was delivered to the learner.) If a participant expressed reservations or tried to terminate the experiment, the experimenter would respond with a carefully scripted set of responses: "Please continue," "The experiment requires that you continue," "It is absolutely essential that you continue," and "You have no other choice; you must go on."

The great surprise in these studies was how many participants continued to obey the experimenter's orders and deliver the maximum level of shock to the confederate (Box 9.3). In the *remote-feedback version* of the experiment, in which the learner was in an adjoining room and could not be heard except when he vigorously pounded on the wall after a shock of 300 volts, 66 percent of the participants continued the learning experiment and delivered the maximum shock of 450 volts. In the *voice-feedback version*, the participants could hear a series of increasingly desperate pleas by the learner—including screaming that he had a heart condition—until finally, ominously, he became silent. Despite the many cues that the learner was suffering, 62.5 percent of the participants delivered the maximum shock (Milgram, 1965, 1974).

Opposing Forces

Milgram's participants were caught in an agonizing conflict. On the one hand were forces compelling them to complete the experiment and continue delivering shock (Reeder, Monroe, & Pryor, 2008). Among these forces was a sense of fair play: they had agreed to serve as participants, they had already received payment for doing so, and they felt they now had to fulfill their part of the bargain. Some were probably also motivated by the reason they'd agreed to participate in the first place: to advance science and the understanding of human behavior. Normative social influence was also likely at play—in this case, the desire to avoid the disapproval of the experimenter or anyone else associated with the study. Closely related to this concern was the very human desire to avoid "making a scene" and upsetting others (Goffman, 1966; Miller, 1996).

On the other hand, several powerful forces compelled participants to want to terminate the experiment. Foremost among these was the moral imperative to stop the suffering of the learner (Burger, Girgis, & Manning, 2011). Participants may have felt a specific desire not to hurt the genial man they had met earlier, as well as a more abstract reluctance to hurt others. Some were also probably concerned about what would happen if something went wrong. "What if he dies or is permanently injured?" "Will there be a lawsuit?" Still others may have wondered about the prospect of having to walk out with the learner after everything was over and the resulting embarrassment they might feel or possible retaliation from the learner.

Understanding these opposing forces leads to a better understanding of why participants responded the way they did and why the whole experience was so stressful. How might the rate of obedience change if the strength of these opposing forces were modified (Blass, 2000, 2004; Miller, 1986)? This is exactly the

reactance theory The idea that people reassert their prerogatives in response to the unpleasant state of arousal they experience when they believe their freedoms are threatened.

Resisting Social Influence

People don't always conform, comply, and obey. They sometimes engage in heartening, even heroic, acts of independence—refusing to go along with misguided peers, defying the illegitimate demands of a commanding officer, or blowing the whistle on unethical business practices. What enables people to hold their ground, follow their conscience, and resist being influenced by others?

The pressure to give in to others can be offset by the tendency to resist attempts to restrict freedom of action or thought. According to **reactance theory**, people experience an unpleasant state of arousal when they believe their free will is threatened, and they often act to reduce this discomfort by reasserting their prerogatives (Brehm, 1956). If your parents tell you you mustn't dye your hair, does your desire to dye it diminish or increase? Reactance theory predicts that the moment you feel your freedom is being taken away, it becomes more precious and your desire to maintain it increases.

Once motivated to resist, what factors might increase someone's ability to stand firm? One important variable is practice. In Milgram's obedience studies, many participants wanted to disobey and even tried to do so, but they weren't very good at it (Milgram, 1963, 1974). Maybe if they had been trained to disobey when the situation called for it, they would have done a better job. There is evidence that the Christians who tried to save Jews during the Holocaust tended to be people who had a history of helping others, either as part of their job or as volunteers. Those

who helped the most often didn't have any higher regard for their Jewish neighbors than those who helped less; they were simply more practiced in reaching out and providing aid.

Another way to increase the ability to resist social influence is to have an ally. In Asch's conformity experiment, having just one additional person who departed from the majority was enough to reduce conformity rather dramatically (Asch, 1956). Indeed, the most important lesson of Asch's research is just how difficult it can be to be the lone holdout. People also need to be wary of potentially slippery slopes. The stepwise procedure in Milgram's experiments may have played an important role in the surprising levels of obedience observed in those studies. It's often easiest to resist influence from the start, rather than giving in and hoping to put a stop to things later on. As the Catholic Church teaches, "Avoid the near occasion of sin."

It's important to keep in mind, too, that many social influence attempts are based on appeals to emotion, as we discussed earlier. A particularly effective strategy for dealing with emotion-based approaches is simply to put off a response. If there is a "first law" of emotional experience, it is that emotions fade and moods change. Therefore, the compulsion to give in because you are caught up in a particular emotion can be diminished simply by waiting to respond. After the initial feelings dissipate, you can then decide whether to comply with a request on the merits of the idea, not on the basis of a bad mood or an intense emotional state.



RESISTING SOCIAL INFLUENCE

In the fall of 2017, the "Me Too" movement erupted, norms and awareness shifted, and many people who previously turned a blind eye toward or stayed silent about efforts to cover up wrongdoing suddenly refused to do so. Many people did so in the face of considerable pressure from their harassers and employers not to step forward.



IN TOUCH WITH THE LEARNER

In a "touch-proximity" version of Milgram's original experiment, participants were required to force the learner's hand onto the shock plate, which reduced the participants' obedience rates.

experiment, the teacher (the participant) could neither see nor hear the learner (except for one episode of vigorous pounding), and in the voice-feedback version, the learner was still not in view, but he and his vigorous protests were clearly audible, and the teacher was constantly aware of him. In subsequent variations of the experiment, Milgram introduced the *proximity version*, in which the learner received his shock in the same room where the teacher delivered it, from only 1.5 feet away, as well as a *touch-proximity version*, in which the teacher was required to force the learner's hand onto the shock plate (a sheet of insulation supposedly kept the teacher from being shocked, too). **Figure 9.10** shows the effect of these manipulations. As the learner became more and more present and "real," the teachers found it increasingly difficult to deliver the shocks, and obedience rates diminished.

question Milgram tried to answer through a comprehensive series of studies in which he conducted important variations on his original studies.

TUNING IN THE LEARNER Milgram directed his initial efforts at increasing the forces that compelled people to want to terminate the experiment and stop hurting the learner. These forces were all triggered by an awareness of the learner's suffering, so Milgram tried to increase them by making the learner more prominent—or, in his words, by "tuning in the learner." Participants spontaneously tried to do the opposite—that is, to deal with their own discomfort by tuning *out* the learner, sometimes literally turning away from him in their chair. As already noted, in the remote-feedback version of the

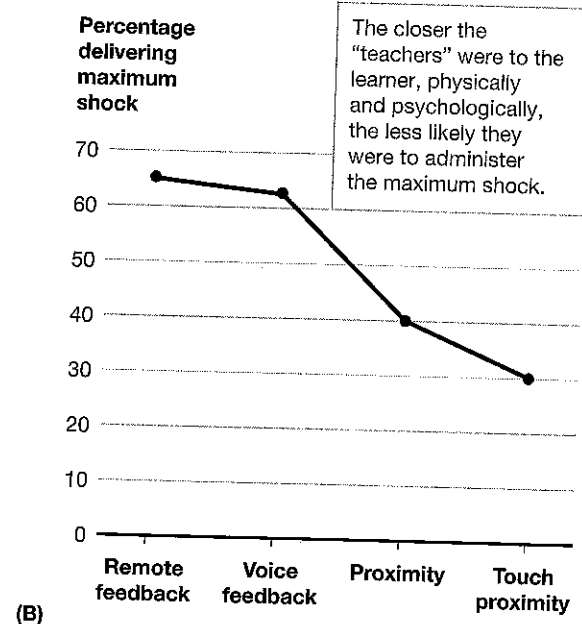
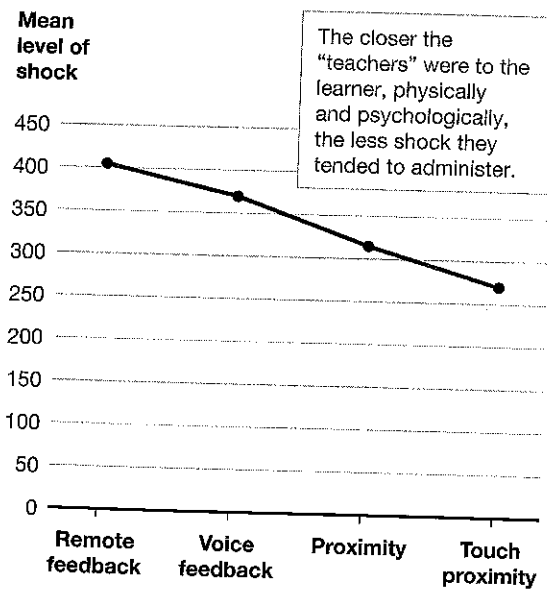
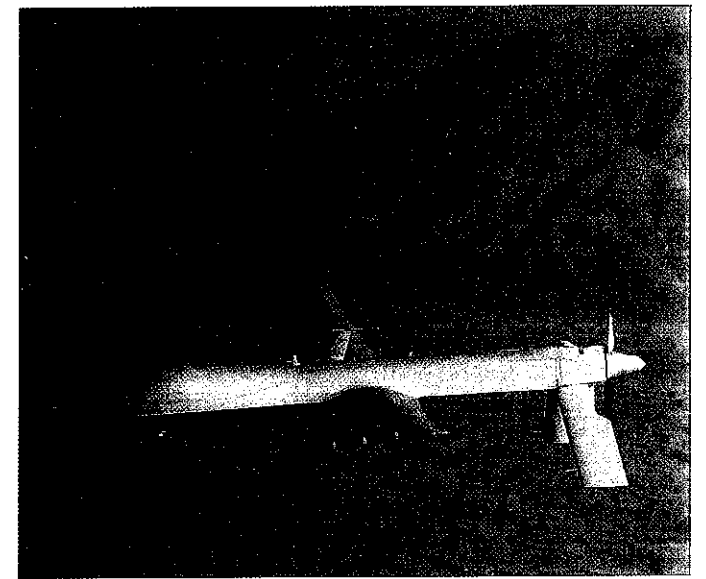


FIGURE 9.10
TUNING IN THE LEARNER

The effect of Milgram's experimental manipulations that made the learner more and more salient on (A) the mean level of shock participants delivered and (B) the percentage of participants who delivered the maximum amount of shock. As the "signal" coming from the learner got stronger, obedience declined.

Source: Adapted from Milgram, 1965.



TUNING OUT THE VICTIM

Missiles can be fired from drone (pilotless) aircraft by a person located thousands of miles away. This distance can make the harm more abstract, making orders to fire less likely to be questioned.

One lesson to be drawn from this experiment is chilling: the more removed we are from others, the easier it is to hurt them. Consider, for example, military combat, which is often no longer hand-to-hand. A mere push of a button can release a Hellfire missile from a Predator drone and strike a target a continent away. The remoteness of the victims in such cases makes the harm done to them abstract, so the emotional consequences of aggression are weakened dramatically, and people find it easier to harm others than they would if they had any kind of direct contact with the victims. Or consider how much more remote our communications are online rather than face-to-face. The indirectness of online communication has been cited as one reason for the prevalence of cyberbullying (Kowalski, Giumetti, Schroeder, & Lattanner, 2014).

TUNING OUT THE EXPERIMENTER Another way Milgram influenced the rate of obedience was to strengthen or weaken the "signal" coming from the experimenter, thereby strengthening or weakening the forces encouraging participants to complete the experiment. In the standard version of the study, the experimenter was present in the same room, right next to the participant. In an *experimenter-absent version*, the experimenter gave the initial instructions alongside the participant, but then left the room and issued all subsequent orders over the telephone. By physically removing himself from the scene, the experimenter lost much of his influence, and participants were less likely to obey.

Another way to diminish the experimenter's power is to alter the experimenter's authority. In one version, for example, instead of an authoritative experimenter, an "ordinary person" (seemingly another participant, but in reality a confederate) was the one who delivered the orders to increase the shock level each time the learner made a mistake. In still another version, two experimenters initially instructed the participant to shock the learner. At one point, however, one of the two experimenters announced that he found the proceedings objectionable and argued with the other experimenter, who continued to urge the participant to complete the experiment.

Figure 9.11 (see p. 302) shows the results of these manipulations. As the experimenter became less salient and less of an authority in the participant's mind, it became easier for the participant to defy him, so the rate of obedience declined. Notice that this series of experimental variations had a more pronounced effect than the "tuning in the learner" series (compare Figures 9.10 and 9.11). Making it *easier* for participants to disobey (for example, by decreasing the authority or power of the experimenter) thus seems to be more effective than increasing their *desire* to disobey (for example, by making the learner's protestations and pain more real). This distinction provides an important clue to understanding the surprising levels of obedience observed in Milgram's experiments.

Would You Have Obeyed?

Nobody anticipated the widespread levels of obedience Milgram observed. A group of psychiatrists predicted that fewer than 1 percent of all participants—a pathological fringe—would continue until they delivered the maximum amount

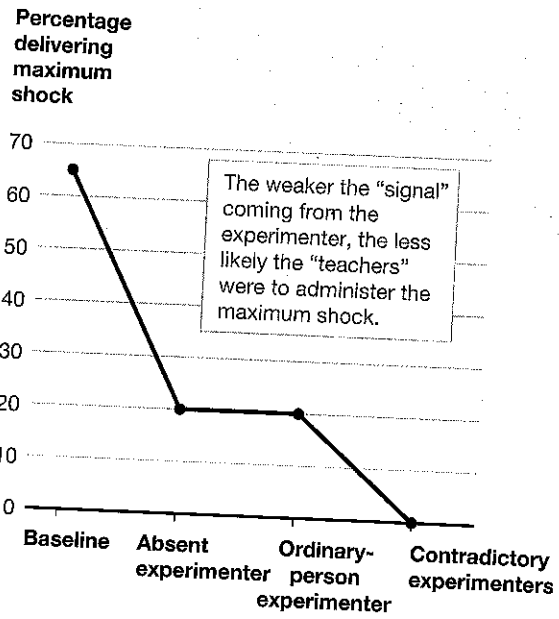
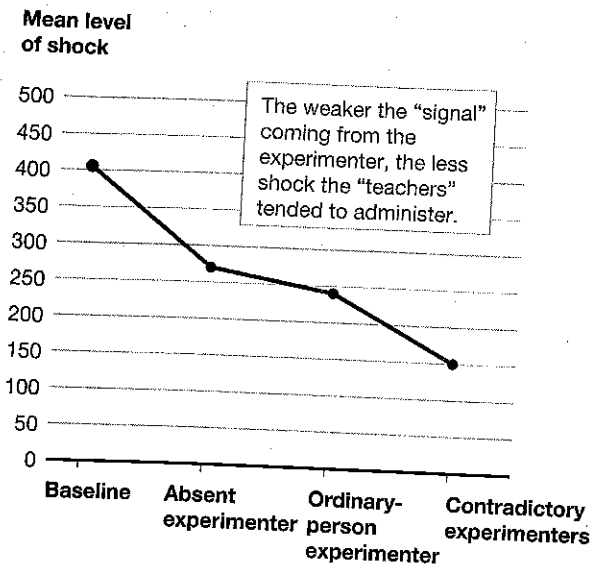


FIGURE 9.11
TUNING OUT THE EXPERIMENTER

The effect of Milgram's experimental manipulations that made the experimenter less and less salient on (A) the mean level of shock participants delivered and (B) the percentage of participants who delivered the maximum amount of shock. As the "signal" coming from the experimenter got weaker, obedience declined.

Source: Adapted from Milgram, 1965.

of shock. This failure of prediction is matched by an equally noteworthy failure of after-the-fact insight: the vast majority of people believe, even after hearing the basic results and all the study variations, that they themselves would never deliver very high levels of shock. Thus, although Milgram's experimental variations shed light on when and why people engage in such surprising behavior, they don't provide a fully satisfying explanation, or else we would be more likely to accept that we ourselves might obey in the same situation. As Lee Ross put it, the experiments do not pass a critical "empathy test" (Ross, 1988). They don't lead us to empathize fully with the obedient participants and take seriously the possibility that we would also obey to the end—as most participants did. A truly satisfying explanation might not convince us that we would *surely* obey, but it should at least convince us that we *might* act that way.

Milgram's work is often mentioned in discussions of how people sometimes obey the directives of malevolent government officials and engage in sadistic, demeaning torture, such as that observed at Abu Ghraib, or commit hideous crimes against humanity, such as those witnessed during the Holocaust in Nazi Germany, in the "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia, or in the massacres in Cambodia, Rwanda, or Darfur. Explanations of such incomprehensible cruelties vary along an "exceptionalist-normalist" continuum. The exceptionalist thesis is that such crimes are perpetrated only by "exceptional" people—that is, exceptionally sadistic, desperate, or ethnocentric people. Many Germans were virulent anti-Semites. The Serbs harbored long-standing hatred and resentment against the Bosnians. The Rwandan Hutus had a score to settle with the Tutsis. The normalist thesis, in contrast, is that most people are capable of such destructive obedience, and given the right circumstances, almost anyone would commit such acts (Box 9.4).

Milgram's research, of course, is typically taken to support the normalist position. Milgram himself certainly took this position. When Morley Safer on the

Would Milgram Get the Same Results Now?

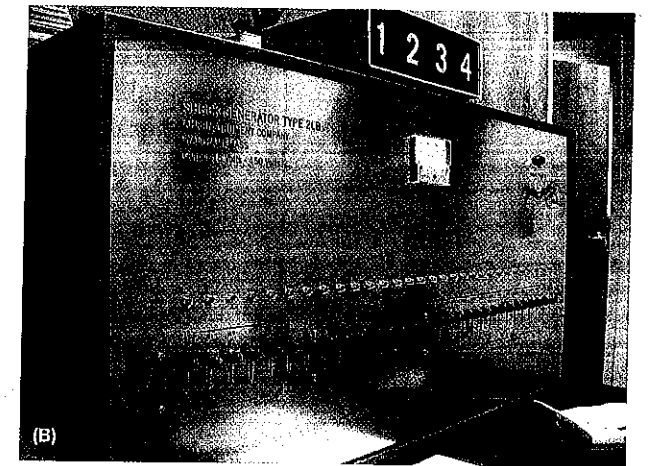
Milgram's studies were done in the early 1960s. But that was then, this is now. If you conducted Milgram's experiments today, would you get the same results? Some argue that today's more intense media coverage of such events as domestic spying by the U.S. National Security Agency, along with constant claims of "fake news" by President Trump, have made people less trusting of authority and thus less likely to obey instructions to harm another individual. Perhaps, but that's a difficult idea to test because ethical concerns make it impossible to replicate Milgram's experiments today. All psychological research must now be approved by an institutional review board (IRB), whose responsibility is to make sure any proposed research wouldn't cause undue stress to the participants or harm them in any way (see Chapter 2). Few, if any, IRBs would approve a direct replication of Milgram's experiments.

Jerry Burger, at Santa Clara University in California, did the next best thing by conducting a near-replication of Milgram's basic experiment to investigate whether the tendency to obey authority has changed since Milgram's time (Burger, 2009; Burger, Girgis, & Manning, 2011). Burger identified a critical moment in the original proceedings when disobedience was most likely: right after the participant had (supposedly) delivered 150 volts

of electric shock and the learner protested and demanded to be released. It was something of a now-or-never moment: four out of five of Milgram's participants who didn't stop at this point never stopped at all.

Burger saw an opportunity. It would be ethically unacceptable to put people through the stress of deciding between disobeying the experimenter and administering 300 or 400 volts of electricity. But the procedure isn't so stressful—and is thus more ethically acceptable—up to the 150-volt level. Until that point, Milgram's learner hadn't protested, so the pain caused by the shocks (the participants would presume) can't be that bad. Burger therefore sought and received permission from Santa Clara's IRB to replicate Milgram's basic experiment up to that point only.

The results were essentially the same as those obtained by Milgram himself. In Burger's study, 70 percent of the participants were willing to administer the next level of shock (165 volts) after hearing the learner's protest. This compares with 82 percent of Milgram's participants—not a statistically significant difference. Men and women were equally likely to continue past the critical 150-volt level. Today, people seem to react to pressure to obey the same way they did more than 50 years ago.



REVISITING MILGRAM (A) In Burger's 2009 near-replication of the original Milgram experiments from the 1960s, participants faced the same conflict over whether to administer increasing levels of shock (up to 165 volts) to the learner or to call a halt to his suffering by refusing to continue. (B) Burger used the same type of bogus shock generator used by Milgram.

CBS TV show *60 Minutes* asked whether he thought something like the Holocaust could happen in the United States, Milgram offered this opinion:

I would say, on the basis of having observed a thousand people in the experiment and having my own intuition shaped and informed by these experiments, that if a system of death camps were set up in the United States of

the sort we had seen in Nazi Germany, one would be able to find sufficient personnel for those camps in any medium-sized American town. (Quoted in Blass, 1999, p. 955)

Let's take a closer look.

THEY TRIED BUT FAILED One reason people think they would never behave like the average participant in Milgram's studies is that they misunderstand exactly how the average participant behaved (Ross, 1988). People conjure up images of participants casually going along with the experimenter's commands, increasing the shock level from trial to trial, and being relatively inattentive to the learner's situation. Indeed, Milgram's experiments have often been described as demonstrations of "blind" obedience.

But that's not what happened. Participants didn't blindly obey. Nearly all tried to disobey in one form or another. Nearly everyone called the experimenter's attention to the learner's suffering in an implicit plea to stop the proceedings. Many stated explicitly that they refused to continue (but nonetheless went on with the experiment). Some got out of their chair in defiance, only to sit back down moments later. Most participants tried to disobey, but they weren't particularly good at it. As Ross pointed out, "the Milgram experiments have less to say about 'destructive obedience' than about ineffective and indecisive *disobedience*" (Ross, 1988, p. 103).

This distinction is critical. Most of us have had the experience of having good intentions but not being able to translate those intentions into effective action. For instance, maybe you've *wanted* to speak up more forcefully and effectively against racist or sexist remarks, but were too slow to respond or the words didn't come out as forthrightly as you intended. Or maybe you've *wanted* to reach out to someone who was being ignored at a party, but you were distracted by your own social needs. Most of us can relate to being good-hearted but ineffective, but most of us can't relate to being uncaring.

A chilling parallel to the behavior of Milgram's participants is the behavior of some of the German soldiers called on to execute Polish Jews during World War II (Browning, 1992). Members of German Reserve Police Battalion 101 were mostly men who hoped to avoid the inevitable violence of the war by volunteering for police duty in Hamburg. After the invasion of Poland, however, they were reassigned to serve as military police in occupied Poland. Most of their duties consisted of routine police work. But on July 13, 1942, the men were roused from their barracks before dawn and taken to the outskirts of the village of Józefów, where they were given gruesome orders: to round up all the Jewish men, women, and children from the village, send all able-bodied young men to a work camp, and shoot the rest.

Most were shocked and repelled by their orders. Many resisted. But their resistance, like that of Milgram's participants, was feeble. Some kept busy with petty errands or moved to the back of the battalion, hoping to avoid being called on. Others took part in the roundup but then refrained from shooting if no one was watching. Still others fired but missed intentionally. What they *didn't* do was state assertively that they wouldn't participate or that what they were being asked to do was wrong. They tried to find an easy way to disobey, but there was no easy way—and so they obeyed. (Of course, many of the acts of genocide during the Holocaust were perpetrated by individuals who, unlike

most of the soldiers in Reserve Police Battalion 101, fully embraced what they were doing.)

In the case of Milgram's experiments, participants had trouble halting the proceedings partly because the experimenter wasn't playing by the normal rules of social life. The participants offered reasons for stopping the experiments, but the experimenter largely ignored those reasons, making minimally responsive statements such as "The experiment requires that you continue." Participants were confused and uncertain about how to act. As we noted in our earlier discussion of conformity, people tend not to act decisively when they lack a solid grasp of the events happening around them. What should you do when told to deliver electric shock to "teach" someone who's no longer trying to learn anything, at the insistence of an authority figure who seems unconcerned about the learner's predicament? How do you respond when events have stopped making sense?

These questions have important implications for those real-world instances of destructive obedience with which we should be most concerned. Many of the most hideous episodes of genocide, for example, have occurred right after large-scale social upheaval. Without reliable norms of appropriate behavior, people are less able to muster the confidence necessary to take decisive action to stop such atrocities.

RELEASE FROM RESPONSIBILITY The inability of Milgram's participants to stop the experiment meant they were trapped in a situation of terrible conflict and stress. Although they knew what was happening should not continue, they didn't know how to bring it to an end. They were therefore desperate for anything that would reduce their stress. Fortunately for the participants (but unfortunately for the learner, if he really had been receiving electric shock), the experimenter provided something to reduce their stress by taking responsibility for what was happening. When participants asked, as many did, "Who is responsible for what happens here?" the experimenter responded, "I am responsible." Participants seized on this assertion as a justification for their actions, and the stress they were experiencing was significantly reduced.

Of course, the cover, or "out," the experimenter provided worked only because participants viewed the person taking responsibility as a legitimate authority. People generally don't let just anyone take responsibility and then assume that everything is okay. Suppose you're approached by a strange character on campus who says, "Quick, help me set fire to the administration building; I'll take full responsibility." You certainly would refuse to pitch in. In Milgram's experiments, however, participants believed they could legitimately transfer responsibility to the experimenter because he was a representative of science; in nearly all the variations, the experimenter was affiliated with Yale University, a respected institution (although obedience was still high when the experimenter operated out of a storefront in downtown Bridgeport, Connecticut). These aspects of the situation made it easier for participants to reduce their own stress over what was happening by assuming that the experimenter knew better and was ultimately responsible for what happened.

The cover provided by authorities has implications for some of history's worst acts of destructive obedience. In Nazi Germany, in Rwanda, and at Abu Ghraib, the demands to obey were issued by authority figures who either explicitly took responsibility or whose position supported an assumption of responsibility. And such claims of responsibility have nearly always been legitimized by some overarching ideology. Whether based on nationalism, religious ideology, or ethnic

"I'd rather be a free man in my grave / Than living as a puppet or a slave."

—REGGAE LEGEND JIMMY CLIFF

Step by Step to Genocide

Anti-Jewish laws and policies of the German government before and during World War II are listed below. Notice the gradual nature of their severity.

1. April 1, 1933

Boycott of Jewish businesses is declared.

2. April 7, 1933

Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service authorizes the dismissal of most non-Aryan civil servants (especially those with Jewish parents or grandparents).

3. September 22, 1933

Reestablishment of the Reich Chamber of Culture leads to the removal of non-Aryans from organizations and enterprises related to literature, the press, broadcasting, music, and art.

4. September 15, 1935

The Reich Citizenship Law defines citizens of the Reich as only those who are of German or kindred blood.

5. September 16, 1935

The Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honor forbids marriage between Jews and nationals of German or kindred blood and declares marriages conducted in defiance of this law void, forbids relations outside of marriage between Jews and nationals of German or kindred blood, and forbids Jews from employing in their household female nationals of German or kindred blood who are under age 45.

6. November 16, 1936

Jews are prohibited from obtaining passports or traveling abroad, except in special cases.

7. April 1938

Jews are forced to register with the government all property valued at 5,000 marks or more.

8. July 25, 1938

The Fourth Decree of the Reich Citizenship Law terminates the licenses of Jewish physicians as of September 30, 1938.

9. September 27, 1938

The Fifth Decree of the Reich Citizenship Law allows Jewish legal advisers to attend professionally only to the legal affairs of Jews.

10. October 5, 1938

Jewish passports and ration cards are marked with a J.

11. January 1, 1939

All Jews are required to carry a special ID card.

12. July 1940

Purchases by Jews are restricted to certain hours and stores; telephones are taken away from Jews.

13. September 19, 1941

Jews are forced to display the Jewish badge prominently on their clothing and with few exceptions are not allowed to use public transportation.

14. October 14, 1941

Massive deportation of German Jews to concentration camps begins.

15. October 23, 1941

Jewish emigration is prohibited.

16. January 20, 1942 (the Wannsee Conference)

Nazi leaders decide that 11 million Jews (every Jew in Europe) are to be killed.



(A)



(B)

LEGITIMIZING THE EXPERIMENT

To see how participants would react if the experiment were not conducted at Yale and the authority seemed less legitimate, Milgram had them report to (A) a fictitious business called Research Associates of Bridgeport, located above a storefront in downtown Bridgeport, and (B) inside a seedy office. Obedience rates declined somewhat but remained high even under these conditions.

identity, every example of organized aggression has been draped in a seemingly legitimizing ideology that seeks to present otherwise hideous actions in a way that makes them seem morally appropriate (Staub, 1989; Zajonc, 2002).

STEP-BY-STEP INVOLVEMENT It's also important to remember that the participants in Milgram's experiments didn't deliver 450 volts of electric shock right away. Instead, each participant first administered only 15 volts to the learner. Who wouldn't do that? That's feedback, not punishment. Then 30 volts. No problem there either. Then 45, 60, 75—each step a small one. Once participants started down this path, though, it was hard to stop, and they administered more and more shock. Indeed, the increments were so small that if a certain level of shock seemed like too much, why wouldn't the previous level also have been too much (Gilbert, 1981)?

The step-by-step nature of participants' obedience in these experiments is a powerful reason why so many administered as much electric shock as they did. Most of us have had the experience of gradually getting in over our heads in this way. We may tell a "little white lie"—but one that sets in motion a cascade of events that requires more and more deception. (Many a TV sitcom plot rests on this very sequence.) Our behavior often creates its own momentum, and it's hard to know in advance where that behavior will lead. Milgram's participants can certainly be forgiven for not foreseeing how everything would unfold. Would any of us have seen it any more clearly?

The parallels between this element of Milgram's procedure and what happened in Nazi Germany are striking (Box 9.5). German citizens weren't asked, out of the blue, to assist with or condone the deportation of Jews, Gypsies, gay people, and communists to the death camps. Instead, the rights of these groups were gradually stripped away. Certain business practices were restricted, then travel constraints were imposed, and then citizenship was narrowed; only later were people loaded into boxcars and sent to the death camps. Of course, the step-by-step process in Nazi Germany is no excuse for the atrocities committed, but the Nazis would doubtless have had a much harder time getting so many people to comply if they had started with the last step.

← LOOKING BACK

As Milgram's experiment exemplifies, many factors contribute to people's willingness to obey leaders who demand immoral behavior. Several elements of the situation may make obedience easier to understand: a person's attempts to disobey are often blocked; the person in authority often takes responsibility for what happens; and once the obedience begins, there is typically no obvious stopping point. But when circumstances lead the individual to be tuned in to the victim, obedience decreases substantially. When circumstances lead the individual to tune out the person in authority, obedience is even more greatly reduced, suggesting that it's more effective to make it easier for participants to disobey than it is to increase their *desire* to disobey.

Chapter Review

SUMMARY

What Is Social Influence?

- There are three types of *social influence*. *Conformity* involves a change in a person's attitudes or behavior in response to explicit or implicit pressure from others. *Compliance* involves going along with explicit requests made by others. *Obedience* is submitting to the demands of a person in authority.

Conformity

- Mimicry is the conscious or nonconscious imitation of someone else's behavior. People sometimes conform because of *informational social influence*: they view the actions of others as informative about what is correct or proper. People also conform because of *normative social influence*: they conform with others to avoid disapproval and other social sanctions.
- Conformity pressure depends on group characteristics. The larger the size, the greater the group's influence, but only up to about four people. Unanimous groups exert more pressure to conform than those with even a single dissenter. The greater the expertise and status of the group members, the greater their influence.
- People from interdependent cultures are more likely to conform than people from independent cultures. Women tend to conform more than men, but both men and women conform more in domains in which they have less knowledge.
- The direction of influence is not always from the majority to the minority. Sometimes minority influence can

be substantial, especially when the minority expresses consistent views.

Compliance

- Reason-based approaches to compliance include invoking the *norm of reciprocity* by doing a favor for someone who then feels obligated to do a favor for you in return or by making a concession and using the *reciprocal concessions technique* (door-in-the-face technique) to get the target person to make a concession as well. With the *foot-in-the-door technique*, a person first gets someone to agree to a small request before making a more substantial request.
- Emotion-based approaches to compliance include getting the targeted person in a good mood, which is likely to increase compliance because of mood maintenance and because of the influence of the good mood on how the request is interpreted.
- Compliance may also result from a desire for *negative state relief* because an act of compliance may reduce guilt or sadness.
- Norm-based approaches to compliance take advantage of the tendency to look to others for guidance about how to behave. *Descriptive norms* indicate how people actually behave in specific contexts, and *prescriptive norms* indicate how people should behave in various situations. To get people to adhere to a prescriptive norm, the two should not be pitted against each other.

Obedience to Authority

- The study of obedience has been dominated by the Milgram experiments, which demonstrated the surprising willingness of most people to go along with the seemingly harmful demands of an authority.
- Participants in obedience studies are caught in a conflict between two opposing forces: normative social influence and moral imperatives. The balance between these forces shifts toward the former when participants tune out the learner and tune in the experimenter. It shifts toward the latter when participants tune out the experimenter and tune in the learner.
- Although Milgram's results strike nearly everyone as wildly counterintuitive, they can be rendered less surprising by considering that most participants made (ineffective) attempts to terminate the experiment, the experimenter took responsibility for what was happening (thus alleviating the participants' sense of responsibility for what they were doing), and the participants were caught on a "slippery slope" because of the step-wise nature of the demands.

THINK ABOUT IT

1. What two reasons appear to explain why people so often mimic one another?
2. Suppose your dining hall is having a contest, and you have to guess how many gumballs are in a giant jar (the closest guess wins). You and a few friends walk up to the gumball jar and tell your guesses to the volunteer running the contest. Your friends all say their guesses out loud, and you go last. You find yourself increasing your gumball estimate to be closer to those of your friends. How could each type of social influence (normative and informational) have affected your guess? How could you reduce the normative social influence in this situation?
3. In the battle for LGBTQ rights, what kind of social influence can minority LGBTQ groups exert on the majority? Should

their goal be to engage public support or private internalization and acceptance of their arguments among members of the majority?

4. Suppose you want to increase voting rates among the millennial generation (people born in the 1980s and 1990s). Describe one reason-based approach, one emotion-based approach, and one norm-based approach you could use to do so.
6. In the context of the Milgram experiment, give an example of "tuning in the learner" and an example of "tuning out the experimenter," and explain how each one affects obedience rates.

The answer guidelines for the think about it questions can be found at the back of the book . . . 

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