

Chapter 7: Conformity, Compliance, and Obedience

I. Norms

A. Social Norms

- Rules for accepted and/or expected behavior
- They are generally Unstated
- Often we only see them when they are violated.
- [Examples](#)



B. Functions of Norms

1. Descriptive Function

- norms reflect what most people do in a given situation.

2. Injunctive Function

- norms specify what ought to be done (acceptable vs. unacceptable beh.)
 - E.g., Taboo Words:

3. Lubricating Social Interaction

- Provide us with expectancies that simplify new and familiar situations
- Problems arise when we/others apply the wrong norms to a situation.
 - Creates arousal - humor vs. anger



C. Norm Violations

Why don't people always behave in a normative manner?

- Normative Focus Theory (Cialdini et al., 1990)
 - Only norms that are salient (come to mind easily) due to recent activation or activation by the situation, will guide behavior.

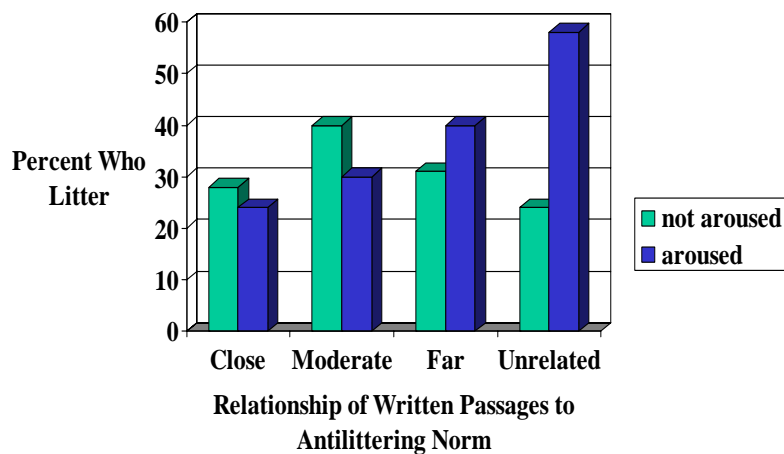
Killgren, Reno, & Cialdini (2000)

- presented 4 messages against littering
- all varied with respect to how directly they addressed littering (vs. related issues like noise pollution or civic responsibility in general or completely unrelated issue).
- ½ p's walked up and down stairs for 3 minutes (high arousal)
- ½ rested (low arousal)

Killgren, Reno, & Cialdini (2000)

- Measured heart rate using a procedure requiring a sticky goo on the palms. Gave P's a paper towel to wipe it off and measured whether they threw it away when left or littered.
- P's in low arousal condition littered less (regardless of message type)
- P's in high arousal littered less when message directly addressed littering.
- Arousal made norm less "automatically available"

Killgren, Reno, & Cialdini (2000)



D. Social Roles

- Norms associated with ones status in a specific situation
- The Stanford Prison Study demonstrated the impact that role expectations can have on behavior.
 - Guards behave brutally and prisoner behave incorrigibly because of the roles they have to play.
 - Not because of any specific personality “deficits”.

II. Conformity

- changing ones behavior to fit the current social norms (and/or perceived group pressure)
- anti-conformity = change behavior to go against social norms

A. Functions of Conformity

- In U.S./Individualist Cultures, conformity is viewed rather negatively, up to a point.
 - Live free or die (anti conformist)
 - America; Love it or Leave it (ultra conformist)
- Conformity provides order and predictability in interactions
- Too much conformity can be damaging as well (depending on who's norms you are conforming to, e.g., despots and malcontents)

B. Muzafer Sherif & the Autokinetic Effect

- 1) - Investigates the formation and perpetuation of group norms.
 - P's view small light 50 ft away in a completely dark room.
 - Autokinesis occurs = Light appears to move, because of the constant movement of the eye. The lack of visual cues make the light look like it is moving back and forth.

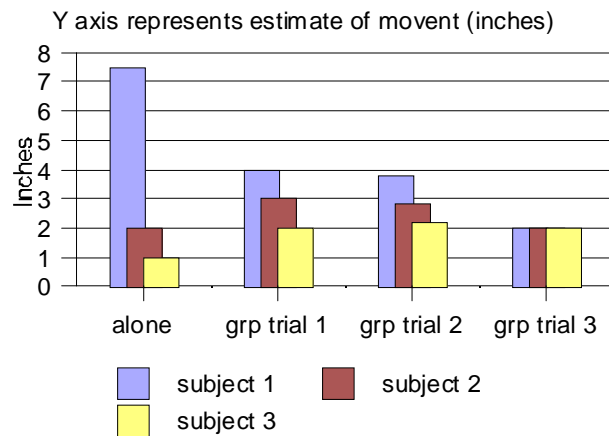
B. Sherif Cont.

2) P's view light alone and estimate how far the light is moving.

3) P's view light in groups and publicly state their estimates. Every 2 minutes they make an new estimate.

- P's start out with very different estimates
- Over time they reach consensus. All tend to report similar estimates.

Sherif Autokinetic Study

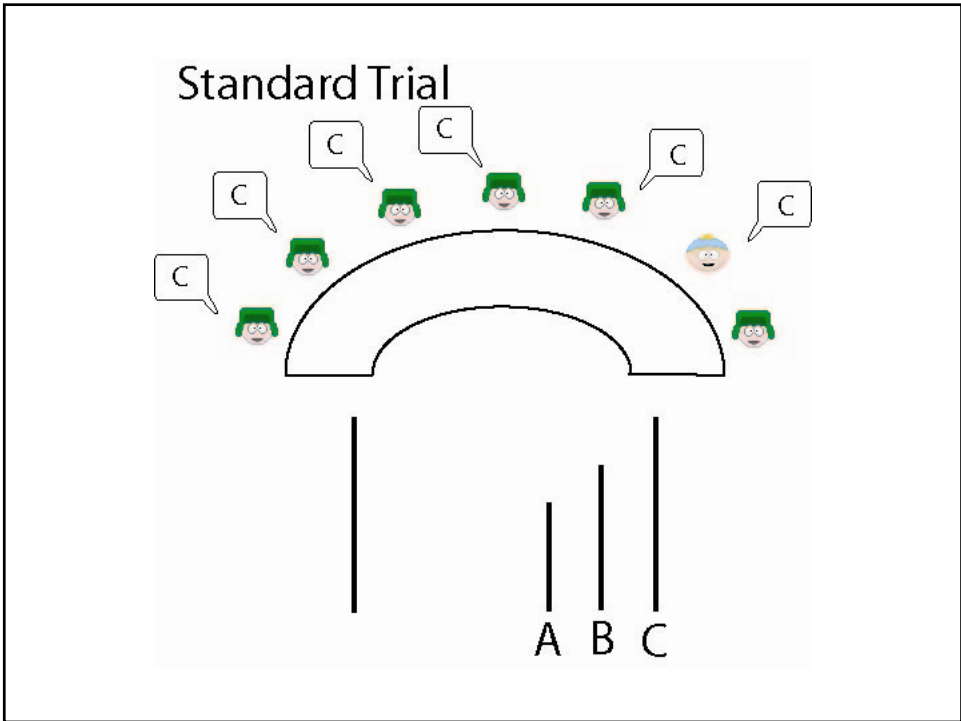
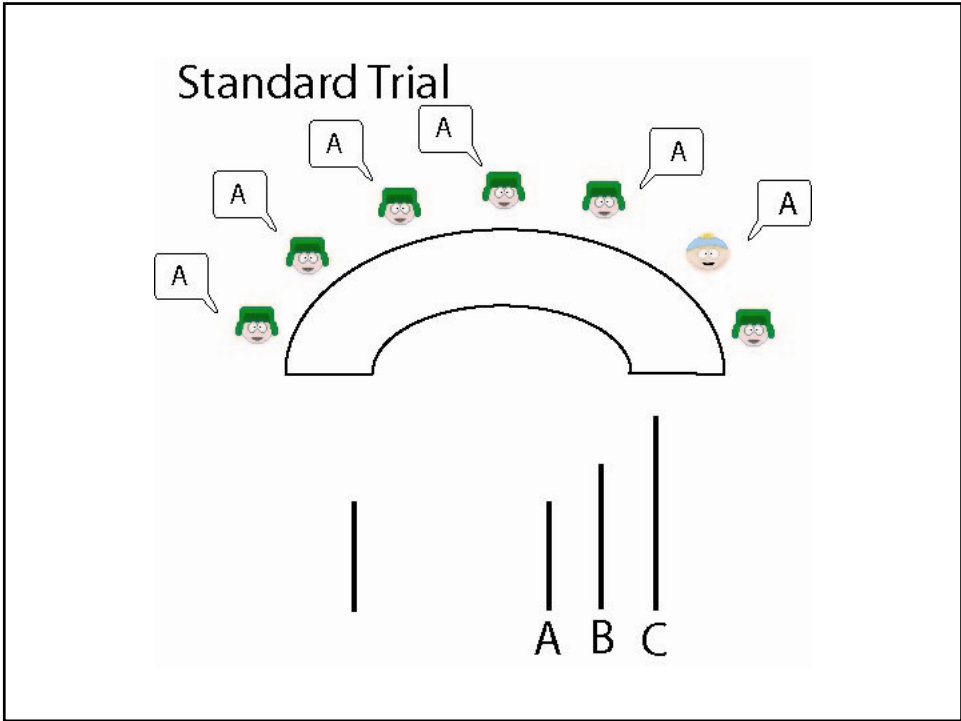


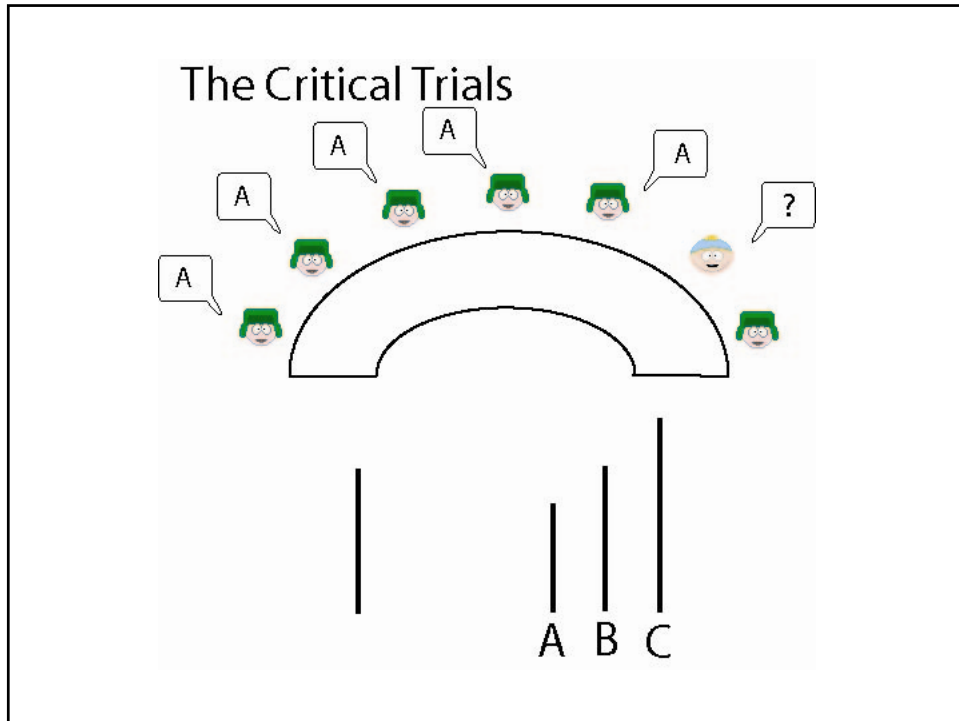
B. Sherif Cont.

- 4) If add a confederate who holds firm, all estimates gravitate toward confederate's estimate.
- 5) If add new P's they gravitate toward group norm.
- 6) Jacobs & Campbell (1961)– An inflated group norm (established by a confederate) will persist for five generations.
 - This demonstrates effects of history and cohort on group norms

C. Solomon Asch & The Line Judgement Studies

- 1) Investigated conformity to a group that is clearly wrong.
- 2) Participants have to match one of 3 lines of different lengths with a target line.
- 3) When alone, participants were correct 99% of the time.
- 4) Group Condition :
 - 6 confederates and 1 participant
 - Group seated in ½ circle facing stimulus chart
 - P's seated in 6th position (so five confederates report judgments before Ps' turn)





C. Solomon Asch Cont

5) 12 of 16 trials, Confederates made correct matches. On 4 trials, Confederates made incorrect matches (but all confederates gave same incorrect answer).

6) Results

- on critical trials 37% went along with the group.
- 76% of P's gave at least one incorrect answer.
- 5 % of P's made errors on non-critical trials

7) Potential Limitations

a. Will you conform if the judgement is important?

- Kretch et al. (1962). Berkley students conformed to group pressure to agree with this counter attitudinal statement. “Free speech is a privilege. It is proper for a society to suspend free speech when it feels threatened.”

7) Potential Limitations Cont.

b. Does group size Matter?

- Larger groups elicit greater conformity.
- Groups larger than 5 do not significantly increase conformity.
- Depends on context & type of conformity.
 - Mann 1977 - Forming a line at a bus stop.
 - Milgram et al. 1969 - stop and look up, on the sidewalk.

7) Potential Limitations Cont.

c. Does unanimity matter?

- If one other person dissents, then P's don't conform.
- Shaw et al. 1957 - even if a person who conforms states publicly that they are not sure, P's will not conform.

D. Public Compliance vs. Private Acceptance

- Though Sherif and Asch's studies demonstrate conformity, they seem different somehow.
- Sherif = Private Acceptance = Informational Social Influence
 - People actually come to believe that the light is moving the distance that they say.
 - The stimulus is ambiguous so they look to the group for information to resolve the ambiguity.

D. Public Compliance vs. Private Acceptance

- Asch = Public Compliance = Normative Social Influence
 - People do not actually believe the lines are the same length.
 - Group is clearly wrong, but conform to avoid group rejection and/or punishment.

F. Strength of the Social Influence

- increases in situational ambiguity increase Informational SI.
- increases in group Power (ability to distribute rewards and punishments) increases Normative SI
- increases in group attractiveness/prestige increase NSI.

III. Compliance

- Changing ones behavior as a result of direct requests from one person.
- Main research paradigms have focused on helping/volunteerism and purchasing behaviors.

A. Low Ball

- start off with a low offer, then say that option is no longer available (or made a mistake and was never available).
 - once you are committed you are more likely to stay committed. (people as consistency seekers vs. cognitive inertia)

B. Foot in the door

- People are more likely to agree to a large request, if they agree to a small request first.
- Freeman & Frazier (1966)
 - Large request = 2 hour home inspection of household products
 - 4 conditions =

Freeman & Frazier (1966)

Large request = 2 hour home inspection of household products

Small request = answer some questions about the soaps used

4 conditions

- 1) Agree and Perform = perform small request at time 1, then large request is made at time two
- 2) Agree Only = agree to small request at time 1 but don't perform it
- 3) Familiarization = contact twice but no request made at time 1
- 4) One-contact = contact once and make large request at time 2

Freeman & Frazier (1966)

Results

Condition	% Agreeing to Large Request
Agree & Perform	52.8
Agree Only	33.3
Familiarization	27.8*
One Contact	22.2**

* $p < .07$, ** $p < .02$; Significantly different from Agree & Perform Condition

B. Foot in the door

- Self-Perception Theory (D. Bem) - after agreeing to a small request, one attributes their behavior to their desire to be agreeable (due to lack of evidence for an external attribution).

C. Door in the Face

- People will be more likely to agree to a small request, after refusing to agree with a large request.
- Cognitive Dissonance - refusal to comply creates dissonance (refusal is dissonant with people's view of themselves as agreeable and helpful). Dissonance is reduced by agreeing to comply to the less extreme request.

D. That's not all

- People are more likely to buy a product if they think they will get something else for free.
- Jerry Burger (1986). Students were 66% more likely to buy a cupcake for \$.75 if they thought they were going to be given a unique deal, where they also get 2 cookies with the cup cake (73% bought it).
- Customers that were told that the cookie and the cupcake were just sold together for \$.75 were less likely to buy it (44% bought it).

IV. Obedience

A. The Milgram Obedience Studies

A. The Milgram Obedience Study

- The Back ground
 - Hanna Arendt's Report: *A Report on the Banality of Evil*
- Interviews with Adolph Eichman's During his Trial (1961)

1. The Milgram Article

- 65% (26 of 40 males) went to XXX (450 volt level)
- subsequent studies find same % for females
- 100% of subjects went all the way to the 300 volt level.
 - point where Learner pounds on wall and stops responding
- Only 5 subjects refuse to go beyond this point.

2. The Video

- Teachers can hear the learner throughout the study.
 - 75 - 105 volts learner grunts
 - 120 -255 volts learner cries OUCH
 - 270 volts learner screams in agony, requests to be let out.
 - 315 - Learner refuses to answer any more.
 - 330 - Learner is silent
- 65 % Obedience to XXX (450 volts)

B. Manipulating Obedience

1. Unanimity of the Experimenters

- at 125 volt level Learner screams, E1 says continue, while E2 says stop.

- 100 of S's Stop

2. - Groups - (analogous to Asch's study)

- Groups of 3, 1 Subject and 2 confederates

- C1 rebels at 150 volts, C2 rebels at 210

- Only 10% of S's went to 450

B. Manipulating Obedience Cont

3. Proximity (psychological & physical) of the Victim

- Increased proximity = decreased obedience.

- In same room obedience = 40%

- Hold Learners Hand = 30%

4. Proximity of the Experimenter

- in room

- over phone

- on tape recorder

B. Manipulating Obedience Cont

5. Legitimacy of the Researcher

- No Lab coat, average Joe, less formal demeanor = 19% obedience

6. Legitimacy of the Setting

- Run down office building in Bridgeport
- 48% compliance (not a significant decrease)

B. Manipulating Obedience Cont

7. Other Variables

- Gradual escalation of requests
- Little time for reflection
- Experimenter takes full responsibility

Question?

- Ethics - Do you have a problem with this type of research?
- Would we get the same effect today?