

Social Psychology

Lesson 7: Conformity and Obedience Part 2

Lecturer: Maria Heidi P. Arconado

Topics:

- ☑ Principles of Compliance
- ☑ Compliance Techniques
- ☑ Milgram's Study of Obedience
- ☑ Reactance and Asserting Uniqueness

Expected Learning Outcomes

- ☑ Identify the factors leading to compliance.
- ☑ Differentiate the various compliance techniques.
- ☑ Examine the methodology and empirical results of Milgram's study on obedience.
- ☑ Analyze the psychological mechanisms that trigger reactance.

SIX PRINCIPLES OF COMPLIANCE (Robert Cialdini)

1. Friendship or liking

2. Commitment or consistency

3. Scarcity

4. Reciprocity

5. Social validation

6. Authority

1. Friendship or Liking



- we are more likely to comply with requests from people we like than with those from people we don't like or don't know.
- even just a sense of familiarity can affect degrees of compliance.

Study 1: Birthdays

- **Similarity condition:** confederate's birthday matched the participant's
- **Control condition:** confederate's birthday did not match the participant's
- **Request:** Read an eight-page essay and provide one page of written feedback.
- **Result:** Only 30% of the control group agreed to help, while 62.2% of those who shared a birthday agreed.

Study 2: Names

- A requester wore a nametag that either matched or differed from the participant's name.
- **Request:** Donation to charity.
- **Result:** Those with matching names donated more than twice as much money as the control group.

Study 3: Fingerprints

- Participants were told they had a "Type E" fingerprint.
 - ▶ **Condition A:** Participants were told that Type E is very rare (only 2% of people have it) and that the confederate also had it.
 - ▶ **Condition B:** Participants were told that Type E is common (80% of people have it) and that the confederate also had it.
 - ▶ **Condition:** No similarity was mentioned.
- **Request:** To provide a written critique of a shared essay.
- **Result:** The "Rare" group was the most likely to comply.

Study 4: Direct vs. Indirect Similarity

- Participants were again told they were part of a study on fingerprints.
 - ▶ **Group A (Direct Similarity):** The participant was told they shared a rare fingerprint type with the person asking for a donation.
 - ▶ **Group B (Indirect Similarity):** The participant was told they shared a rare fingerprint type with someone else in the lab, but then a *different* stranger asked them for a donation.
 - ▶ **Group C (Control):** No similarity was mentioned.
- **Result:** Only Group A (Direct Similarity) showed increased compliance.

2. Commitment or Consistency

- Once you're already committed to a position, you are more willing to comply with requests that reflect that position.
- **Example:** If a classmate approaches you with a petition to stop animal testing, your response is often dictated by your past stances. If you have previously spoken out against animal testing, you will feel a strong psychological pressure to sign the document to remain consistent with your established position.

3. Scarcity

“Limited Quantity”

“Limited time only”

- When items are rare or running out, they become more desirable.
- We comply because we fear missing out.
- Seen in auction.

Experiment:

Worchel et al. (1975) tested how different types of scarcity affect how we value objects, using cookies as the medium.

Result:

01. Items in short supply (2) are rated more desirable and valuable than plentiful ones (10).
02. Value peaks when items become scarce rather than being scarce from the start.
03. Scarcity caused by high popularity is more influential than scarcity caused by “accident”.

4. Reciprocity

- Individuals are generally more willing to comply with a request from someone who has previously complied with a request from them.

Experiment:

- Regan (1971) tested whether we comply with people because we like them or because we feel indebted to them.
- **Participants:** 77 male undergraduates
- **Method:** A "confederate" (an actor) was made to be either likable or unlikable. The confederate either:
 - Brought the participant a soft drink (the favor).
 - The experimenter brought the drink (control).
 - No drink was given at all (control).
- The confederate later asked the participant to buy raffle tickets.

RESULT: Participants who received a soda bought twice as many raffle tickets as those who did not, regardless of whether they liked the confederate.

5. Social Validation

- Also called Social Proof
- We go along with requests that seem to match up with what others are doing.

Marketing claims that a product is the “best-selling” or “most popular”.



Restaurants highlight specific dishes with a "Chef's Choice" or "Best Seller" icon.

6. Authority

- We are generally more likely to comply with requests from people who appear to have authority.
- This influence often comes from the perception that authority figures are experts.

After a physician's appointment, individuals typically follow medical advice or fulfill prescriptions.

Drivers usually pull over immediately upon seeing a police car's flashing lights.

COMPLIANCE TECHNIQUES

- 1. Foot-in-the-Door**
- 2. Door-in-the-Face**
- 3. That's-not-all**
- 4. Low-Balling**

A. Foot-in-the-Door

- First asked to comply with small request, then bigger requests
- Effective because most want to behave in consistent manner – compliance reduces dissonance.

Experiment:

- Freedman & Fraser (1966) tested if small initial favors increase compliance with larger subsequent requests.
- **Method:** Residents were asked to display a tiny 3-inch "Safe Driver" sign; two weeks later, they were asked to install a massive, unattractive "Drive Carefully" billboard.
- **Result:** Compliance for the billboard jumped from **17%** in the control group to **76%** among those who had first accepted the small sign.

B. Door-in-the-Face

- Large request followed by smaller request
- High rates of compliance

Effective due to:

1. **Perceptual contrast**
2. **Reciprocity**
3. **Guilt**

Experiment:

Guéguen et al. (2011) tested if rejecting a "large" request increases compliance with a subsequent "smaller" one.

- **Experimental Group:** Customers were offered dessert; upon refusal, the server immediately suggested coffee or tea.
- **Control Group:** The server offered only coffee or tea directly, skipping the dessert proposal.

Result:

- **Experimental Group:** Customers who rejected the initial dessert offer were significantly more likely to order tea or coffee.
- **Control Group:** Compliance was notably lower when the tea or coffee offer stood alone.

Experiment:

Guéguen and Pascual (2003) tested the Door-in-the-Face technique in a private setting involving 90 bar patrons.

- **Experimental Group:** A female confederate asked patrons for a drink (large request); after the refusal, she requested only 2 or 3 coins (small request).
- **Control Group:** Patrons were only asked for the coins directly.

Result: The "Door-in-the-Face" condition led to a dramatic increase in both the compliance rate and the average donation amount.

C. That's-not-all

- An initial request is followed by adding something that makes the offer more attractive.

Experiment:

Burger (1986) tested the effectiveness of that's not all technique in an experiment with a bake sale.

- **Experimental Condition:** Sellers quoted cupcakes at 75 cents, then immediately added two "free" cookies before the customer could respond, employing That's-not-all.
- **Control Condition:** Passersby were simply told that the price for the cupcake and two cookies together was 75 cents.

Results

73% of people bought the treats when the cookies were "added" at the last second, compared to only **40%** when they were presented as a single package from the start.

D. Low-Balling

- A strategy in which a target accepts a “low-cost” offer, only then to be told that there are additional hidden costs.

A dealer offers a car for 1.2M pesos. After you commit to the paperwork, they claim a "manager's error" and raise the price to 1.25M. Having already invested time and emotion, you likely pay the extra 50,000 pesos.

- Relies on post-decision dissonance



MILGRAM'S STUDY OF OBEDIENCE

Source: <https://psychology.fas.harvard.edu/people/stanley-milgram>

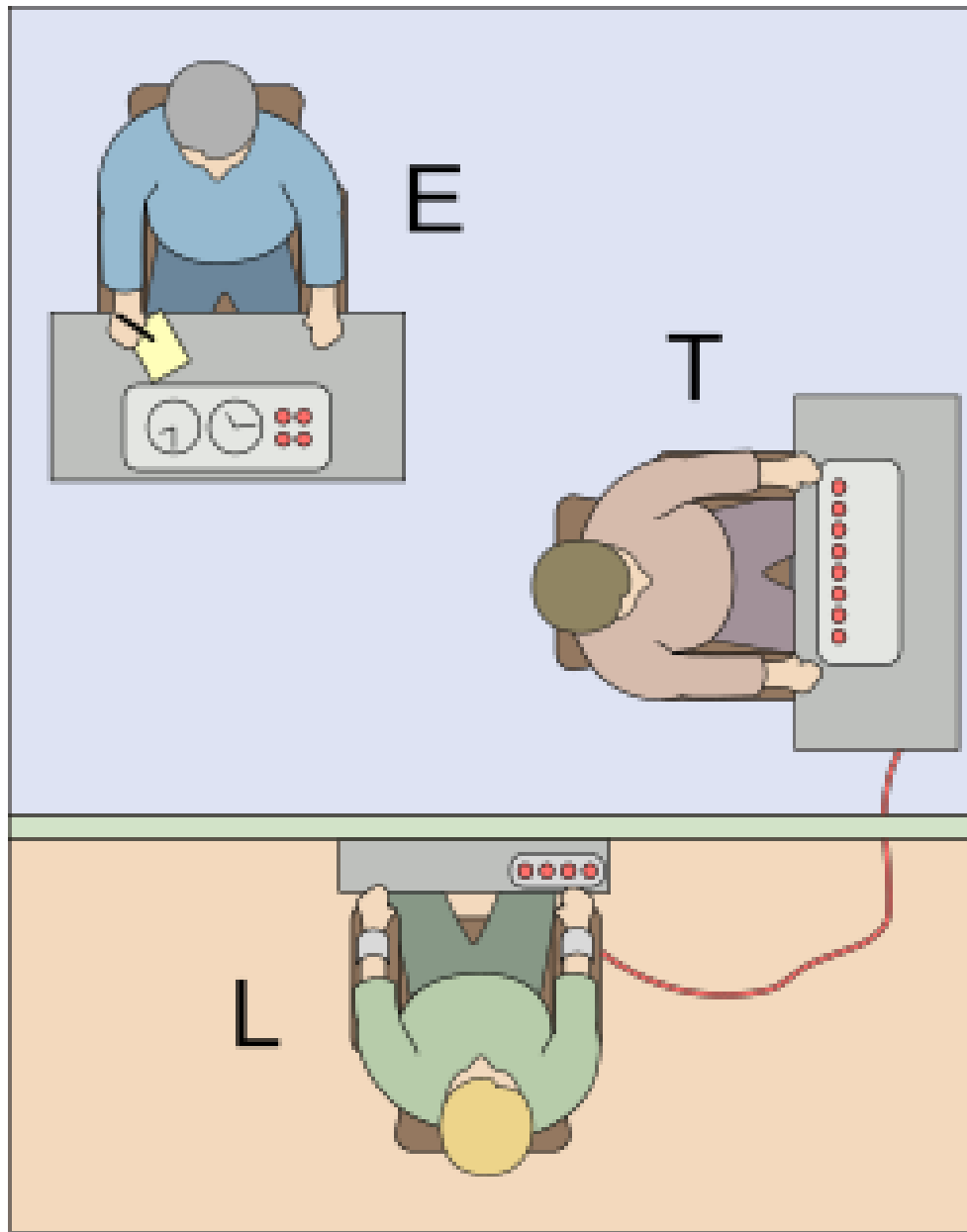
Research Question:

Is it possible that the average person could be influenced to hurt others if an authority figure gave order to do so?



- **Participants:** 40 males (ages 20–50)
- **Apparatus:** A fake shock generator with 30 switches (15V to 450V), labeled from "moderate" to "danger: severe shock."
- **Roles:** Through a rigged draw, the real participant was always the "**teacher**" and the actor (confederate) was always the "**learner**."

Source: <https://jamie-kohn.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/01/milgram.png>



- **Task:** The "teacher" taught word pairs to the "learner" (strapped in another room) and was ordered to deliver increasingly powerful (fake) shocks for every error.
- **Result:** 65% of subjects shocked up to the 450-volt mark (even when confederate appeared injured)

Limitations of Milgram's Experiments

1. Ethical Violations -- Deception and Right to Withdraw
2. Lack of Ecological Validity
3. Gender Bias
4. Cultural Bias

Factor that Breeds Obedience



1. Commands were given by an authority figure.

- Use of expert uniform: the experimenter wore a grey lab coat. This served as a visual cue of expertise and high status.
- When the "experimenter" was replaced by someone in ordinary clothes (e.g. clerk), obedience levels dropped significantly; 80% of the "teachers" refused to fully comply.

2. The experiment was done at a prestigious institution.

- In postexperimental interviews, many participants said that had it not been for Yale's reputation, they would not have obeyed.

3. The authority figure was present in the room with the subject.

- When Milgram's experimenter gave the commands by a telephone, full obedience dropped to 21%

4. Timing of request came quickly; there is little time to think.

- When an authority figure creates a sense of urgency, it forces you to react with your "gut" rather than your logic.

5. Psychological distances (don't see consequences of actions)

- When the victim was remote and the “teachers” heard no complaints, nearly all obeyed calmly to the end.

- Throughout history, executioners have often depersonalized those being executed by placing hoods over their heads.



- The ethics of war allow one to bomb a helpless village from 40,000 feet but not to shoot an equally helpless villager.

Source: <https://cdn.britannica.com/11/104611-004-8B0816E8.jpg>



- As the Holocaust began, some Germans were left shaken by the experience of face-to-face killing.
- That led Heinrich Himmler, the Nazi “architect of genocide” to devise a more humane killing, one that would visually separate the killers and their victims.

Factors That Cause People to Carry Obedience to Extremes

1

The desire to avoid conflict, rudeness, or offending the person in charge.

2

Obeying small initial requests makes it harder to refuse increasingly difficult ones later.

3

Viewing harmful actions as just "part of the job" or standard procedure.

4

Shifting blame to the authority figure ("just following orders")

“I was just following orders”

*“To explain is not to excuse. To understand is not to forgive.
You can forgive someone whose behavior you don’t
understand, and you can understand someone whom you do
not forgive”*

*“When we understand the ordinariness of extraordinary evil,
we will be less surprised by evil, less likely to be unwitting
contributors to evil, and perhaps better equipped to forestall
evil.” – James Waller, 2002*

Lesson of the Experiment:

“Ordinary people can do shocking things.”

The Power of the Situation



- An evil situation produced evil behavior.
- Example: The Stanford Prison Experiment

Experiment:

- Swim and Hyers (1999) asked participants to imagine themselves discussing with 3 others whom to select for survival on a desert island.
- They were asked to imagine one of the others, a man, injecting three sexist comments, such as, ***“I think we need more women on the island to keep the men satisfied.”***
- **Imaginary group:** Only 5 % ***predicted*** they would **ignore** each of the comment or wait to see how others reacted.
- **Reality group:** When students were engaged in discussions where such comments were actually made by a male confederate, **55% (NOT 5%),** said nothing.

DO WE EVER WANT TO BE DIFFERENT?

**When compelled to do A,
will you instead do Z?**

REACTANCE

- A motive to protect or restore one's sense of freedom.
- It arises when someone threatens our freedom of action.
- Attempt to restrict a person's freedom often produce an anticonformity "**boomerang effect**"

ASSERTING UNIQUENESS

- In individualistic western cultures they feel uncomfortable when they appear exactly like everyone else.
- In a group, we are most conscious of how we differ from the others.

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