

Chapter 8: Social Influence

What Is Social Influence?

Conformity

- Automatic Mimicry
- Informational Social Influence and Sherif's Conformity Experiment
- Normative Social Influence and Asch's Conformity Experiment
- Factors Affecting Conformity Pressure
- The Influence of Minority Opinion on the Majority

Obedience to Authority

- The Setup of the Milgram Experiments
- Opposing Forces
- Would You Have Obeyed?

Compliance

- Reason-Based Approaches
- Emotion-Based Approaches

Conformity	Obedience	Compliance
Changing one's behavior or beliefs in response to explicit or implicit pressure (whether real or imagined) from others (page 277)	In an unequal power relationship, submitting to the demands of the more powerful person (page 277)	Responding favorably to an explicit request by another person (page 277)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sherif and autokinetic phenomena• Asch line experiment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Milgram experiment(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reason-based approaches<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Door-in-the-face2. That's-not-all3. Foot-in-the-door• Emotion based approaches

Conformity and Obedience

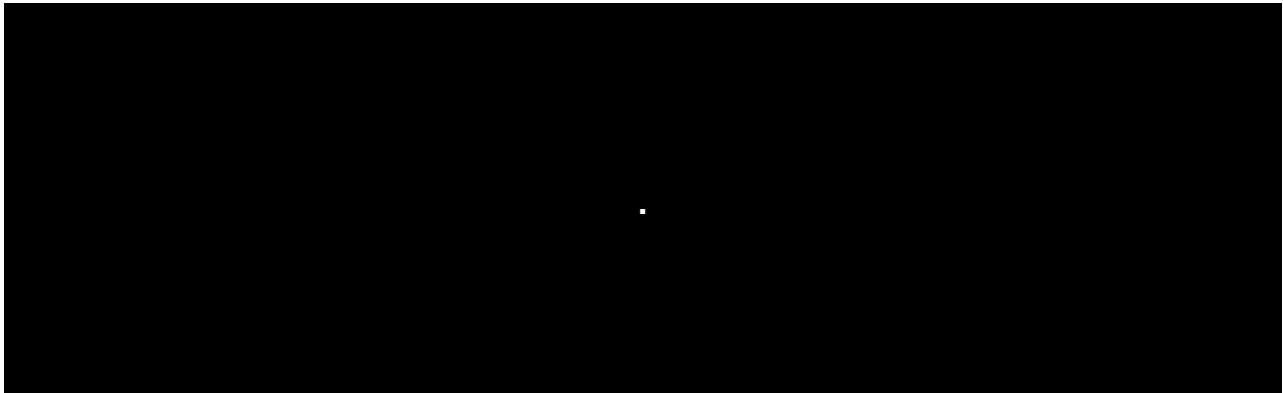
- Conformity Changing one's behavior or beliefs in response to explicit or implicit pressure (whether real or imagined) from others (page 277)



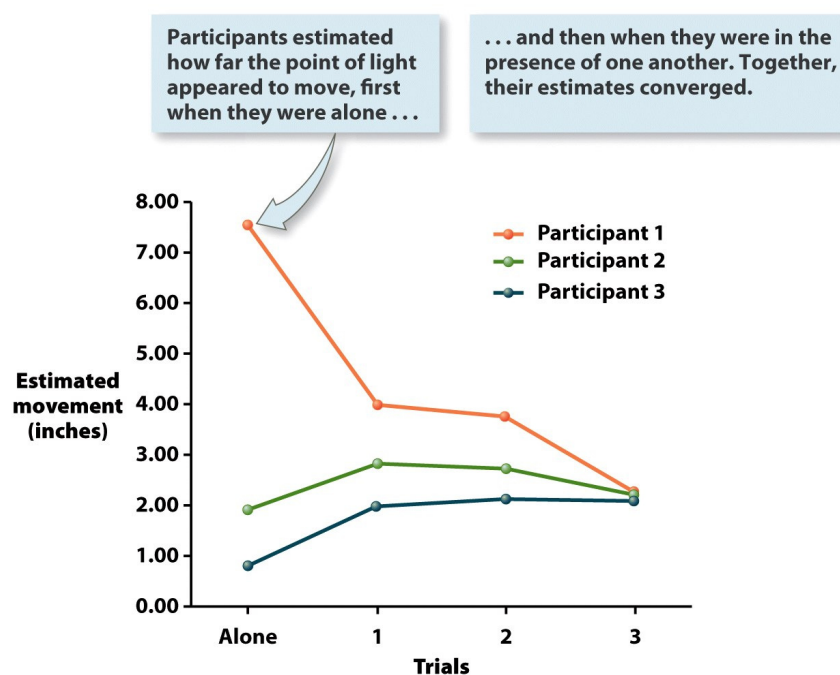
Both personality and social factors influence behavior. However, many of us underestimate the social and environmental factors on our behavior, and overestimate individual factors—the fundamental attributional error.

Conformity: Informational Social Influence

When people are in a dark room and looking at a fixed spot of light, it will appear to move after time (it really doesn't move).



In the Sherif autokinetic studies, he was interested in seeing how the group affected a person's judgment of how far the spot of light moves.



Social Psychology, 2/e Figure 8.3
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Social Proof (informational social influence)

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.



Student and personal examples of social proof (informational social influence)

Sometimes we do not know what the speed limit is. This is particularly true if we are unfamiliar with the area. If we do not know what it is, often we around and see what other people are doing. By observing the behavior of others, we infer what the speed limit is.

As an instructor, I am involved in many fire drills. After spending about ten minutes outside people wonder if it is all right to go back in. Usually someone comes out and gives the okay signal. During the time it is unclear whether or not you should go in, people look for is if other people are going back in. The inference is that if others are going in, it must be all right to go in.

Darek was in a bar that had a no-smoking sign posted on the wall. He likes to smoke but wasn't sure if he should violate the prohibition in the bar. When he looked around, he noticed quite a few people smoking near the pool tables so he figured it must be OK to light up, at least in that area of the bar.

At the apartment complex I was living at, there is a recycling bin for glass. I wasn't sure whether or not I was supposed to remove the labels or not. To answer this question, I looked in the bin to see what other people did. The glass jars had labels on it, so it must be all right to leave the labels on. A few weeks later, there was a note on the door of the tenants indicating the rules for recycling...one of them was removing labels from glass jars.

If the rebels troops are suppose to evacuate as the Empire closes in on them, one clue is to see what others are doing.

Manufacturing Informational Social Influence

Groups, organizations, corporations, political parties and individuals can “manufacture” and exaggerate the predominance of a particular belief, thus affecting public opinion and policy. The form of persuasion is by inference and manipulation of the social environment, not a thoughtful dialogue.

Examples:

- **Microsoft:** They tried to put pressure on state attorney generals, by “manufacturing” letters of protest of their lawsuits against Microsoft.
- **Polls and television and radio “call-in polls”**
- **Politics:** Presidential appearances are by invitation only. What you see on television are his supporters, not critics.
- **Bartenders:** They never empty a tip jar completely. They leave money in their tip jar to implicitly tell their customers that they are to leave money in the jar for them.
- **My plan for the Salvation Army at Christmas:** Have confederates with rolls of pennies always drop off pennies in the containers.

Normative Social Influence

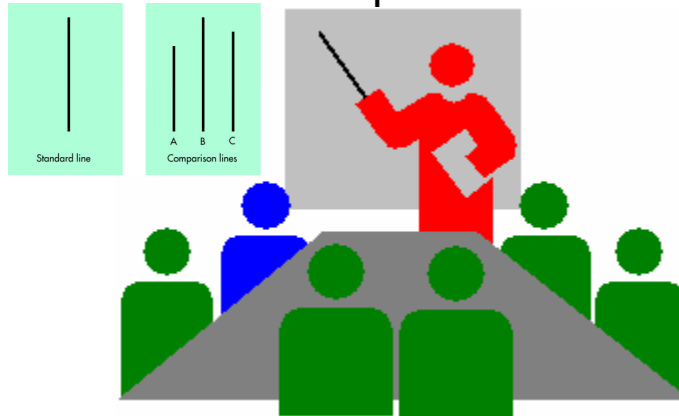
It is understandable that people would conform to a group decision when what is “real” is unclear and difficult to determine.

- Did everyone but me not understand the question?
- Was The Simpson's Movie funny?
- Is Simon mean spirited?
- Should we invade Iraq?
- Clapping or laughing when everyone else is

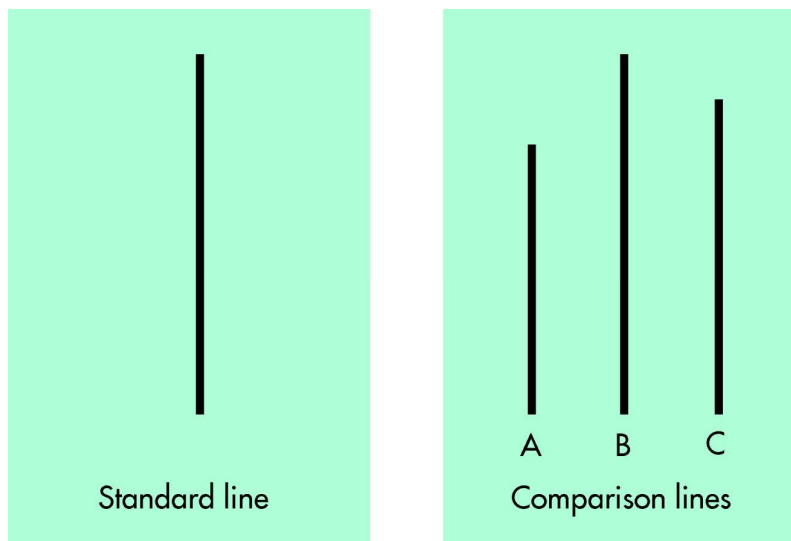
Solomon Asch wanted to illustrate that social pressure to conform to a group of strangers is powerful even in the presence of an objectively incorrect judgment.

Conformity

In the Asch line experiment, you came into a room of five people. You were the sixth person.



You judged which standard line was the same length as the comparison line. For example,

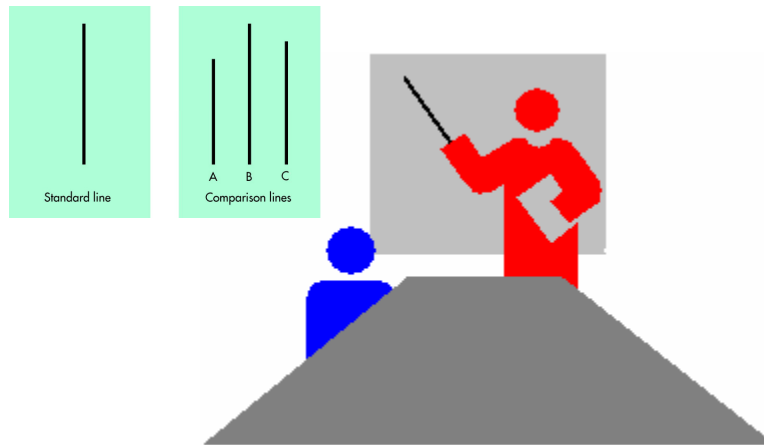


You performed 18 judgment tasks like this one. On 12 random trials, the first five people provided a clearly incorrect answer, such as line A. How many people went along with the group's incorrect judgment?

Results of the Asch Line Experiment

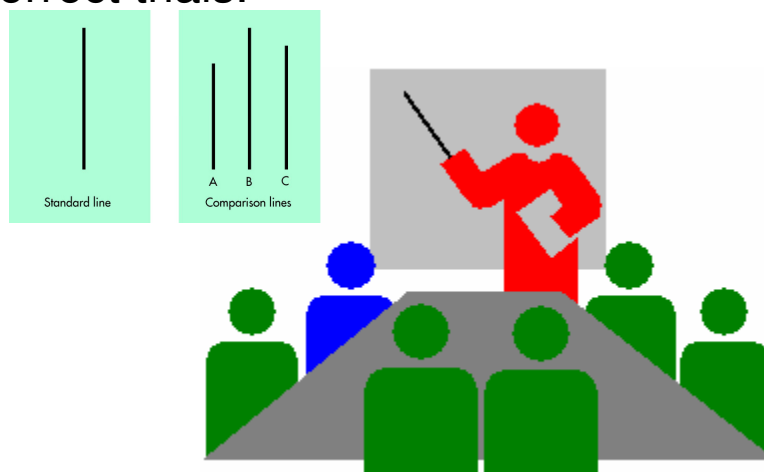
Control group subjects:

- A control group with no other members, only subjects had an error rate of 1%.



Test subjects:

- On at least once incorrect trial, 76% of the test subjects conformed to the group and gave the wrong answer (24% of the test subjects did not conform).
- On all incorrect trials, people conformed to the group and gave the wrong answer on 37% of all the incorrect trials.



Conformity

Most people tend to make a dispositional attribution, rather than a situational attribution. People underestimate the power of the situation. In addition, the following apply to the Asch line experiment:

- (1) There is no direct pressure to conform.
- (2) There is no explicit incentive offered to conform.
- (3) The other people are strangers. Why should you care what they think of you?
- (4) There is an objectively correct answer.

Conformity

After a series of experiments that had some slight changes from the original Asch line experiment, several factors that affect conformity were identified.

Factors that promote conformity	
<p>You're more likely to conform to group norms when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You doubt your abilities or knowledge in the situation. (just like when you start a new job, or when you have low self-efficacy) • You find the task ambiguous or difficult. 	Informational social influence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are strongly attracted to a group and want to be a member of it. • You are facing a unanimous majority of four or five people. • You must give your response in front of a group. • You have not already expressed commitment to a different idea or opinion. 	Normative social influence



Juliette Lassere/Hulton Archive/Getty Images



Dennis MacDonald/Photoedit

Conformity in action? What's "in" during the latest fashion trends changes dramatically over the years. But note how both groups from different eras generally conform to their group's overall "dress code."

Obedience: The Milgram Experiment

- **Obedience** In an unequal power relationship, submitting to the demands of the more powerful person (page 277).

Public Announcement

**WE WILL PAY YOU \$4.00 FOR
ONE HOUR OF YOUR TIME**

Persons Needed for a Study of Memory

* We will pay five hundred New Haven men to help us complete a scientific study of memory and learning. The study is being done at Yale University.

* Each person who participates will be paid \$4.00 (plus 50¢ carfare) for approximately 1 hour's time. We need you for only one hour: there are no future obligations. You may choose the time you would like to come (evenings, weekdays, or weekends).

* No special training, education, or experience is needed. We want:

Factory workers	Businessmen	Construction workers
City employees	Clerks	Salespeople
Laborers	Professional people	White-collar workers
Barbers	Telephone workers	Others

All persons must be between the ages of 20 and 50. High school and college students cannot be used.

* If you meet these qualifications, fill out the coupon below and mail it now to Professor Stanley Milgram, Department of Psychology, Yale University, New Haven. You will be notified later of the specific time and place of the study. We reserve the right to decline any application.

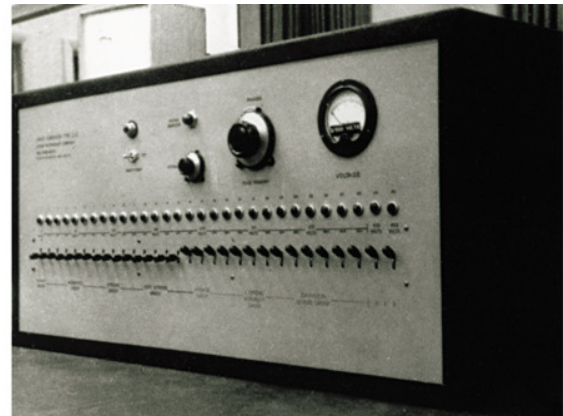
* You will be paid \$4.00 (plus 50¢ carfare) as soon as you arrive at the laboratory.

In this experiment, two volunteers were recruited from a newspaper ad for research on learning. One volunteer would take the role of teacher and the other would take the role of the learner. The teacher would teach a list of words, and the learner would learn them.

The teacher would help the learner learn by punishments—electric shocks.

Obedience: The Milgram Experiment

The teacher would read a list of words and the learner would repeat them back to the teacher. The teacher would administer electric shocks to the learner when he got an answer wrong. Each subsequent shock would be increased 15 volts. A sample shock was delivered to the teacher just in case there was any doubts about that the generator could produce electric shocks.



If the teacher protested and pleaded with the experimenter to stop the experiment, the experimenter said that you should treat no answer as a wrong answer and deliver an electric shock to the learner. The experimenter would prod the teacher with four verbal prods:

- Please continue (or please go on).
- The experiment requires that you continue.
- It is absolutely essential that you continue.
- You have no other choice, you must go on.

Only when the teachers refused to obey the experiment, or they reached 450 volts, the experimenter would stop the experiment.

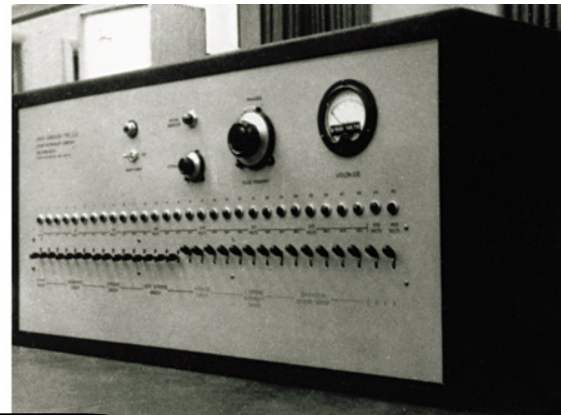
Obedience: The Milgram Experiment

Rewind!

There appears to be two volunteers in this research. There is actually only one volunteer. Unknown to the real volunteer, the second “volunteer” was an accomplice of the experimenter. In this experiment, one of them became the teacher and one of them became the learner of a list of words. The two of them drew names to see who would become the teacher and the learner—the accomplice always became the learner.



Real volunteer
becomes the teacher

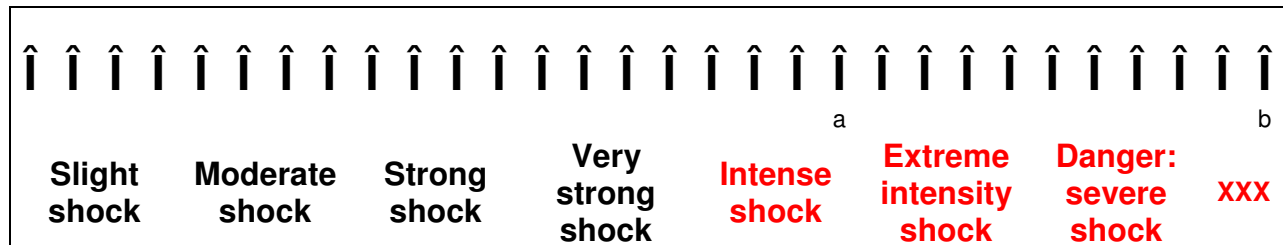


Accomplice always
became the learner

When the volunteer and experimenter leaves this room, he unstraps himself from the chair and turns his apparent screams are pre-recorded for predetermined electric shocks. No electric shocks are delivered except for the sample shock given to the real test subject.

Predicted outcomes of the Milgram Experiment

Milgram asked psychiatrists, college students and middle-class adults to predict how the subjects would behave.



(a) What percentage of test subjects would deliver electric shocks beyond 300 volts?

Class Expectation	Expectation by Psychologists	Experimental Results
	very few	35 of the 40 (87.5%)

(b) What percentage of test subjects would deliver shocks all the way to 450 volts?

Class Expectation	Expectation by Psychologists	Experimental Results
	no one—maybe one in 1000.	26 of 40 (65%)

In general, they believed that everyone would refuse to obey at some point, most would stop at 150 volts, a few would go to 300 volts and no one would go all the way to 450 volts.

Much everyone's surprise, 65 percent went all the way to 450 volts. What is the first kind of response by people when they hear this result?

The first thought was that these were sadistic people. After all, who would deliver electric shocks that were painful to a stranger—the fundamental attributional error?

Results of the Milgram's Original Study

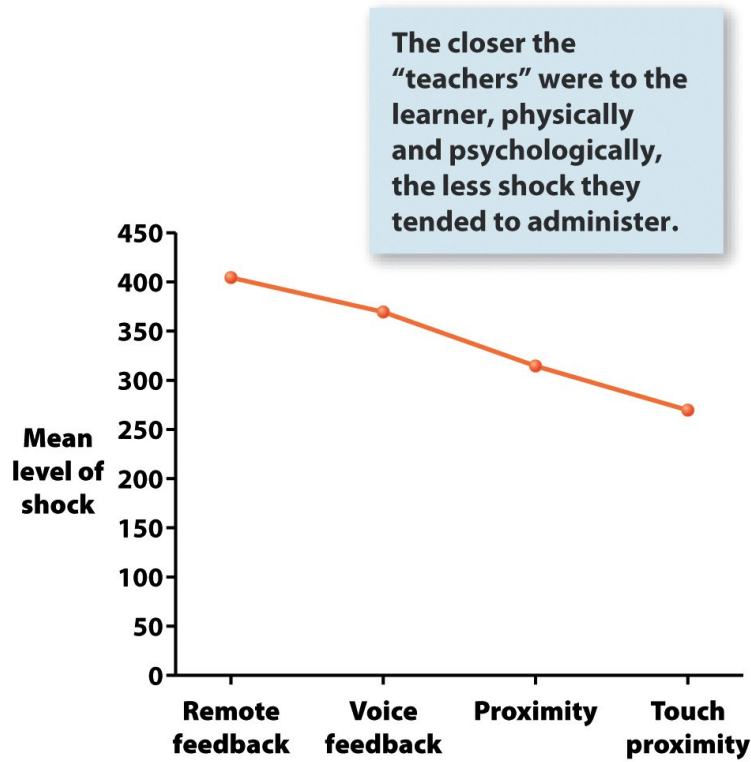
Table 12.4

The Results of Milgram's Original Study

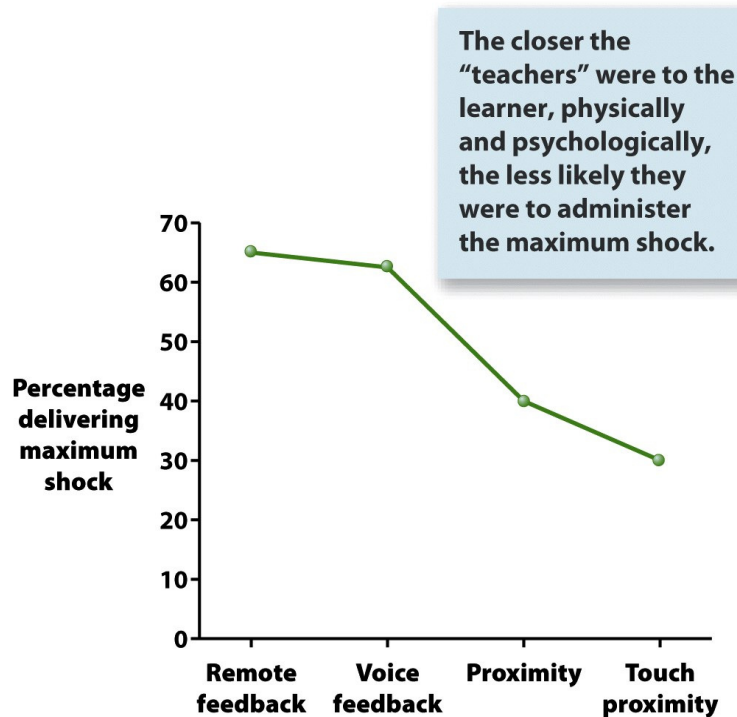
Shock Level	Switch Labels and Voltage Levels	Number of Subjects Who Refused to Administer a Higher Voltage Level
	Slight Shock	
1	15	
2	30	
3	45	
4	60	
	Moderate Shock	
5	75	
6	90	
7	105	
8	120	
9	135	
10	150	
11	165	
12	180	
	Very Strong Shock	
13	195	
14	210	
15	225	
16	240	
	Intense Shock	
17	255	
18	270	
19	285	
20	300	
	Extreme Intensity Shock	
21	315	5
22	330	
23	345	4
24	360	2
	Danger: Severe Shock	
25	375	1
26	390	
27	405	1
28	420	
	XXX	
29	435	
30	450	26



Obedience to Authority: Tuning in the Learner

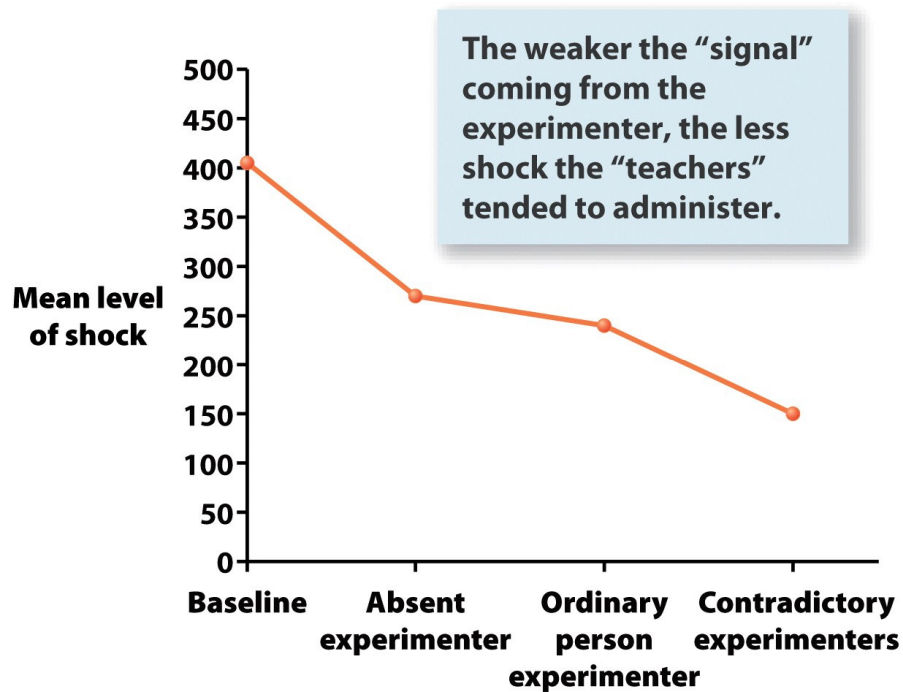


Social Psychology, 2/e Figure 8.7a
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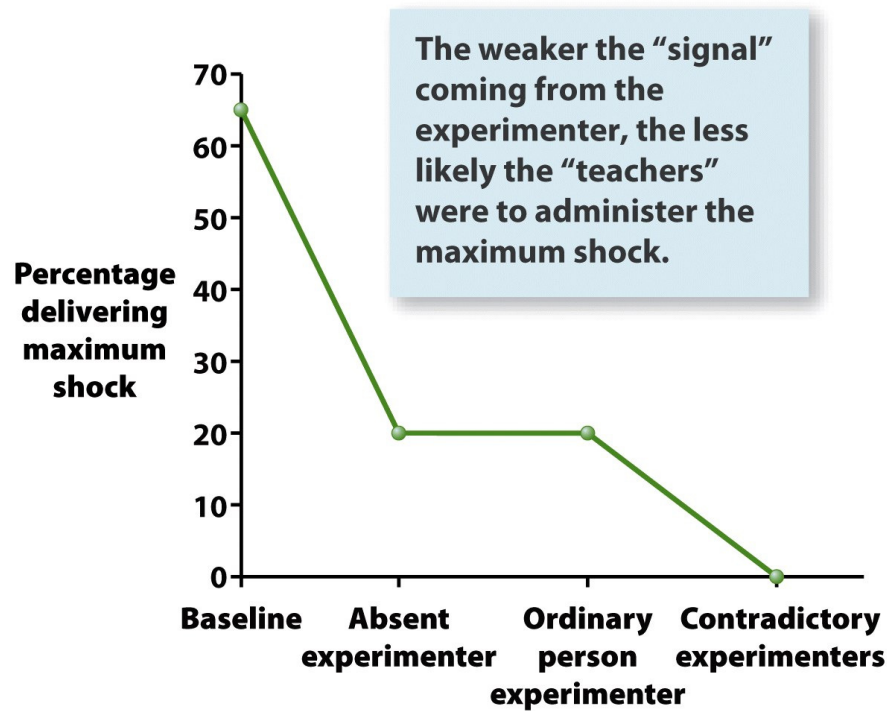


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Obedience to Authority: Tuning Out the Experimenter



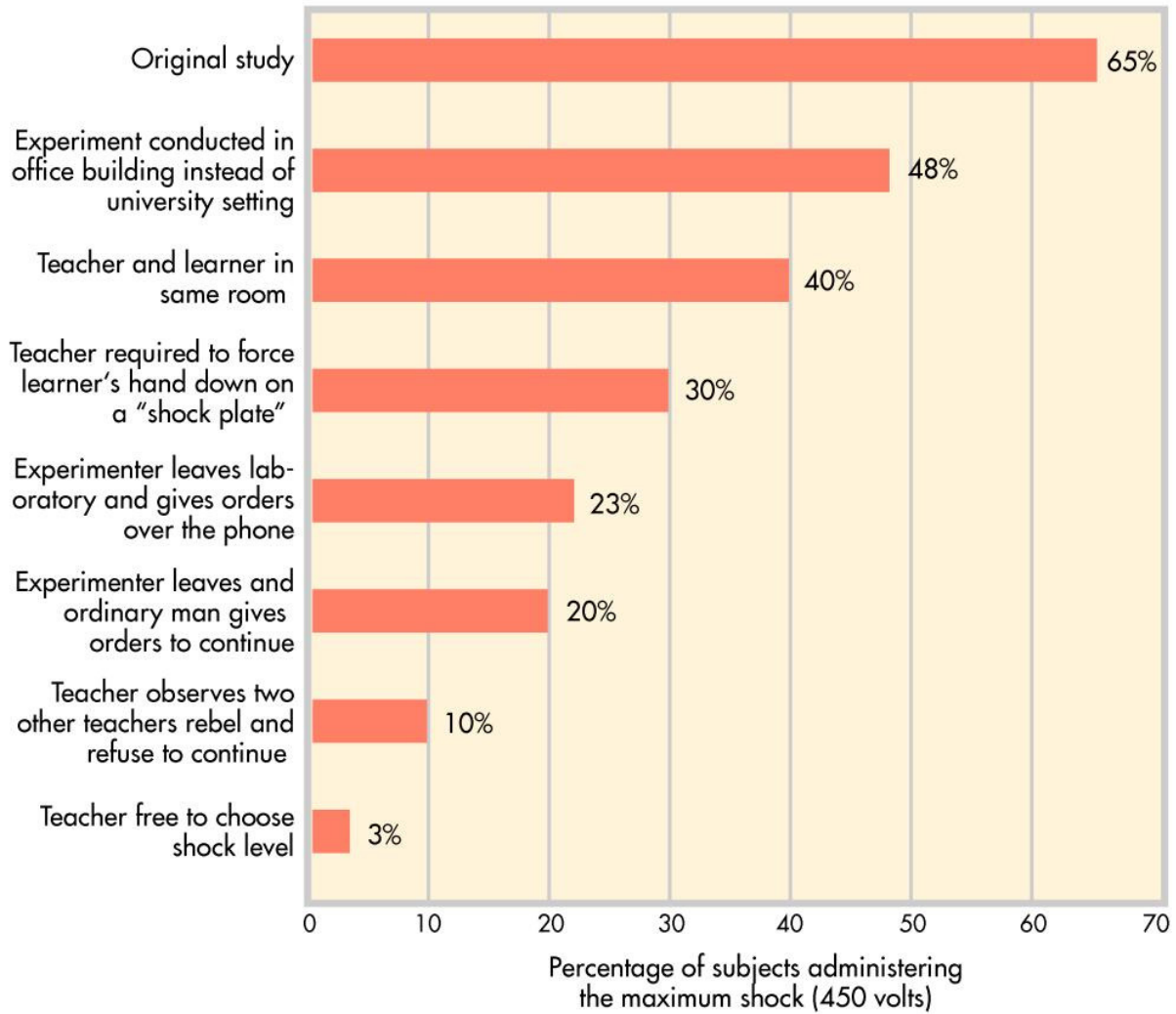
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Factors that Decrease Obedience in the Milgram Studies

Experimental Variations



What is the nature of man?

What does the Milgram experiments reflect about the nature of people?

Are there good aspects (like the humanists focus on), or is it more destructive, as Freud believed?

- (1) When the teachers were allowed to act as their own authority, 95% did not go beyond 150 volts (the first point the learner protested). They were not influenced as much (although some) by the authority figure.
- (2) When the directions were given over the phone, obedience decreased. People lied about the electric shocks given (they only delivered 15 volts).
- (3) Milgram saw that people were more likely to muster the courage to defy an authority when they saw someone else do so—see conditions that affect conformity.
- (4) People truly felt bad about following orders. The teachers of the experiment did not behave in a cold-blooded, unfeeling way.

How does the fundamental attributional error make us make us comfortable in explaining the cruel behavior of others?

Why did people obey?

What factors affected the willingness for the teachers to continue to obey the experimenter's orders?

- A previous well-established mental framework to obey. They volunteered to participate in a psychological study and follow the experimenter's instructions, and they were paid in advance (rule of commitment).
- The situation or context, in which the obedience occurred. It took place in a scientific lab at Yale University with the context of doing scientific research. Even the experimenter was polite, making it difficult to refuse (rule of reciprocity).
- The gradual, repetitive escalation of the task. The escalation of the voltage was in small steps which made it easier to deliver a much larger electric shock.
- The experimenter's behavior and reassurances. The experimenter reassured the teacher that the experimenter was responsible for the well-being of the learner, thus reducing their perception of responsibility.
- The physical and psychological separation from the learner. The learner was in a different room and not visible to the teacher.
- No specific personality trait consistently predicts conformity or obedience in experimental situations.

Why do people hurt one another? What concepts in social psychology (or psychology in general) can help you understand how average people can hurt and murder other innocent people?

When the Greeks trained people to torture prisoners, they did it in small increments (the foot-in-the-door technique).

- guard a prisoner,
- participate in arrest squads,
- ordered to occasionally hit the prisoner,
- observe a torture, and finally
- practice it

When studying the psychology of personality, many students believe that by understanding an individual's personality, they can see what kind of person they will be (Hitler versus Mother Teresa). Implicitly, they were focusing on the individual, and not the social situation that influences behavior.

Many students say that by understanding leaders, we can see what kind of people they will be (eg. Saddam Hussein, Adolf Hitler, etc.). Implicitly, they were focusing on the personality and not the social situation.