



# Social Psychology

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11e

Chapter 6 Conformity

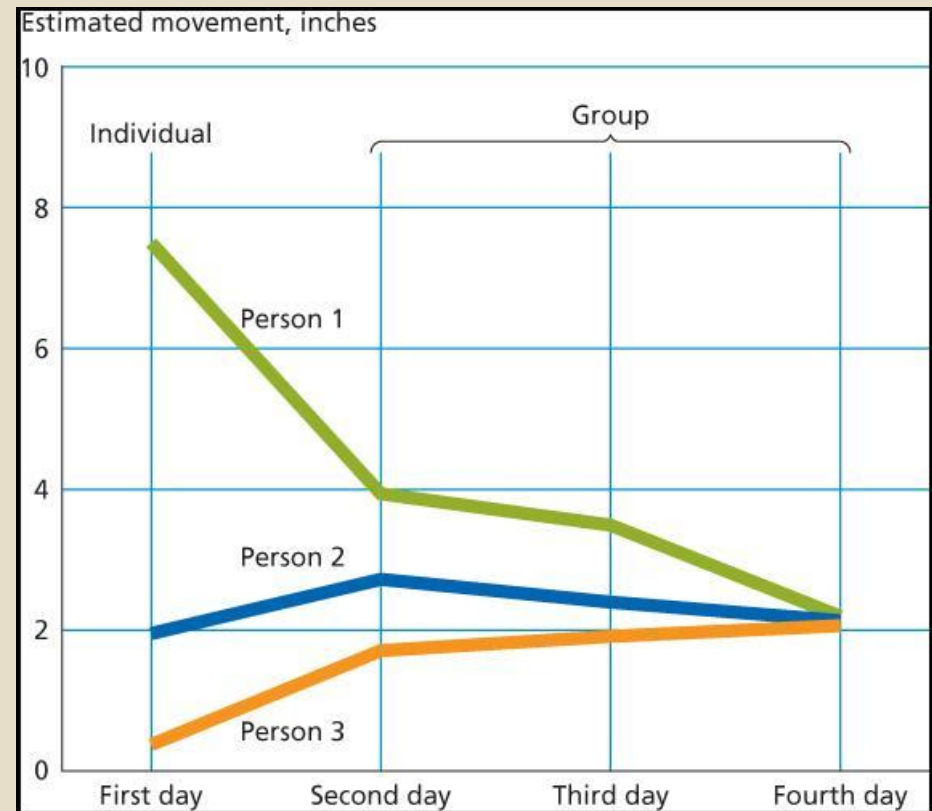
# What Is Conformity?

*What happens at a music concert to indicate conformity?*

- Change in **behavior** or **belief** as the result of real or imagined group pressure
- *Good or Bad? Remember Billy Graham?*
  - Three types of conformity
    - Compliance
      - With social norms (implicit)
      - With request
    - Obedience
    - Acceptance
      - (inward conformity: self perception? What other theory?)

# What Are the Classic Conformity and Obedience Studies?

- Sherif's Studies of Norm Formation
- Used *autokinetic phenomenon* then asked groups of men to determine how much the point of light had moved – the responses of the men changed markedly
  - The point of light never moved

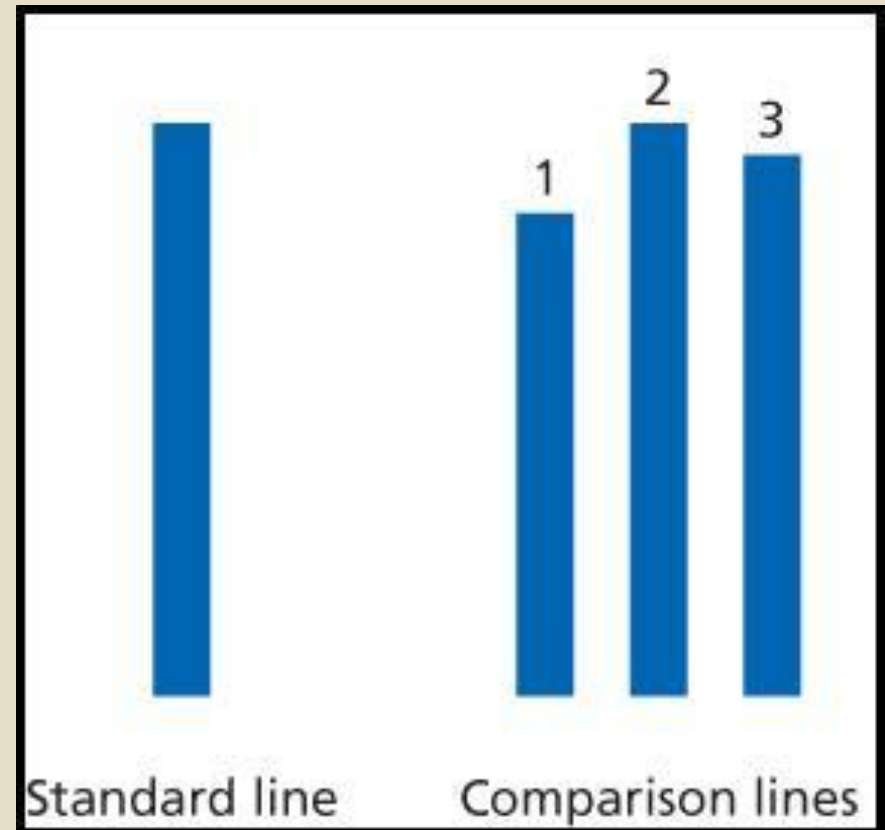


# What Are the Classic Conformity and Obedience Studies?

- Sherif's Studies of Norm Formation
  - Suggestibility (*social contagion*)
    - Contagious yawning
    - Chameleon effect
    - "Werther effect" (J Goethe) –what did Werther commit?
      - Marilyn Monroe
    - Mass delusions
      - Why would nuns bite each other?

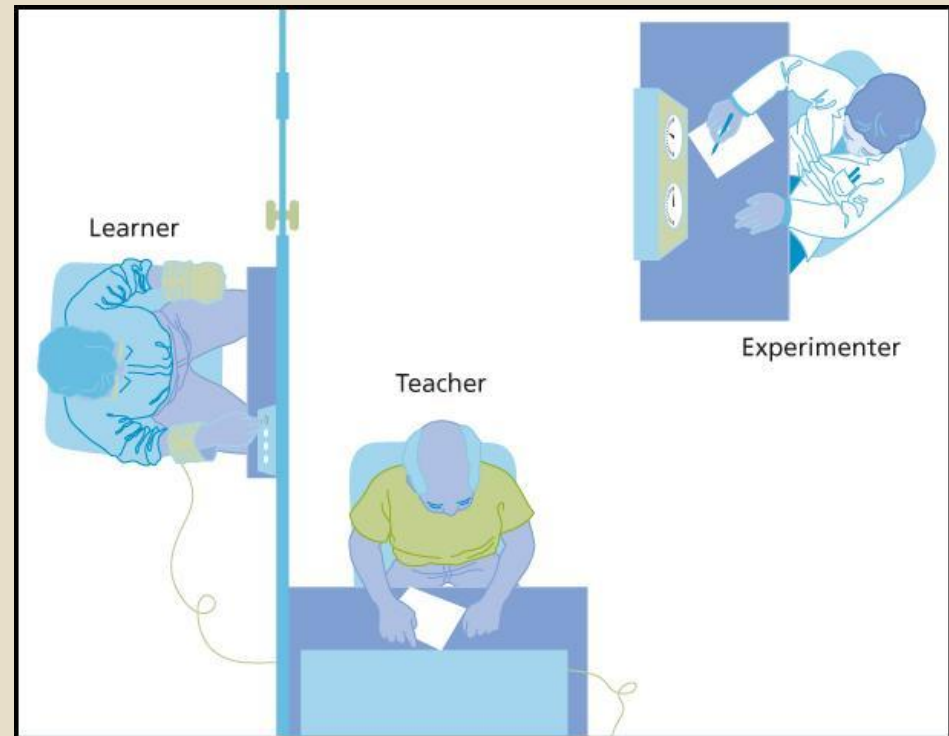
# What Are the Classic Conformity and Obedience Studies?

- Asch's Studies of Group Pressure
  - Perceptual judgment experiment
  - Six confederates gave incorrect answers to see if participant would agree even if he knew it was the incorrect answer



# What Are the Classic Conformity and Obedience Studies?

- Milgram's Obedience Experiments
  - Tested what happens when the demands of authority clash with the demands of conscience
    - Teacher "shocks" learner at the insistence of experimenter
    - 65 percent of participants continued beyond expectations



# What Are the Classic Conformity and Obedience Studies?

- Ethics of Milgram's Experiment
  - Critics said the Milgram's experiment stressed the participants against their will
  - They argued that the participants' self-esteem may have been altered
  - Milgram stated that the ethical controversy was "terribly overblown"
- *What do you think?*

# What Are the Classic Conformity and Obedience Studies?

- What Breeds Obedience?
  - Victim's distance or depersonalization
    - Drones used to kill?
  - Closeness and legitimacy of the authority
  - Institutional authority
  - Liberating effects of group influence
    - Social support is provided



# What Are the Classic Conformity and Obedience Studies?

## ● Reflections on the Classic Studies

- What happened at My Lai with William Calley?
- In Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda, Nigeria?

## ● Behavior and attitudes

- Mutually reinforcing
- A small act of evil to foster the attitude that leads to a larger evil act (*foot in the door technique?*)

## ● Power of the situation

- We underestimate strength of situational cues
  - Lynchings?
- Heroism can occur as well as evil
  - *Examples?*

# What Predicts Conformity?

- Group Size
  - 3 to 5 people will elicit more conformity than just 1 or 2
  - Groups greater in size than 5 yields diminishing returns
  - The greater the number of distinct groups (more entities) that dissent
- Unanimity
  - Observing another's dissent can increase our own independence

# What Predicts Conformity?

- Cohesion

- “We feeling”; extent to which members of a group are bound together, such as by attraction for one another
  - The more cohesive a group is, the more power it gains over its members

- Status

- Higher-status people tend to have more impact
  - Note: status is in the eye of the beholder

# What Predicts Conformity?

- Public Response

- People conform more when they must respond in front of others rather than writing their answers privately
  - Remember “The Billy Graham” effect?

- Prior Commitment

- Most people having made a public commitment stick to it
  - Example: Teens who make a public “virginity-till-marriage pledge” become somewhat more likely to remain sexually abstinent

# Why Conform?

- Normative Influence
  - Based on a person's desire to fulfill others' expectations, often to gain acceptance
    - Produced by social image
- Informational Influence
  - Occurring when people accept evidence about reality provided by other people
    - Produced by desire to be correct

# Who Conforms?

- Personality
  - Is a poor predictor of conformity; situations are better
- Culture
  - Different cultures socialize people to
  - be more or less socially responsive
    - Bantu of Zimbabwe – 51% (Asch study)
    - French less conforming (Milgram study)
    - Collectivist cultures more conforming
- Social Roles
  - Conforming to expectations is an important task when taking on a new social role -Pattie Hearst?
    - Role reversal – *what's the benefit of doing this?*

# Do We Ever Want to Be Different?

- Reactance (J. Brehm)

- Motive to protect or restore one's sense of freedom

- Arises when someone threatens our freedom of action

- *-tell your children not to drink! – to get them to drink*

- Asserting Uniqueness

- We act in ways that preserve our sense of individuality

- In a group, we are most conscious of how we differ from others