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10 SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

Social psychology is the branch of psychology that looks at how your behavior is influenced by that of others and how their behavior is influenced by you. It is the study of human interaction. This psychological subfield is vast and covers a wide array of topics, from romantic relationships to group behavior to prejudice, discrimination, and aggression. This is probably the area in psychology that most nonpsychologists find the most relevant. We all constantly interact with others, and it is meaningful to us to learn more about the psychological processes involved. Social psychology may also be the research domain that contains the greatest number of landmark studies.

The four studies chosen for this section clearly changed psychology by (1) providing new insights into human social behavior; (2) sparking new waves of research to either confirm, refine, or contest the original findings; and (3) creating heated controversy that ultimately enriched the field in general.

First is an early study that surprised behavioral scientists by suggesting that people's attitudes about a person or object do not always predict how they will behave toward that person or object. Second is a recounting of a crucial study that demonstrated the power of conformity in determining behavior. The third study revealed a surprising phenomenon called the *bystander effect*, which says that the more people who witness an emergency, the less likely anyone is to help. And finally we arrive at what may be the most famous (and in some ways, infamous) study in the history of psychology: Stanley Milgram's study of blind obedience to authority.

NOT PRACTICING WHAT YOU PREACH

LaPiere, R. T. (1934). Attitudes and actions. *Social Forces, 13,* 230–237.

Stanford psychologist Richard LaPiere's 1934 study may have generated more subsequent research projects in the history of psychology than any other research presented in this book. It was a study about *social attitudes*—the attitudes you hold about other people or groups of people. It is logical to think that a person's attitude about an *attitude object* (either a person or a thing) will influence that person's behavior toward the object. If you tell me

your attitude toward brussels sprouts is one of hate and disgust, I would predict that when faced with those little green vegetables, you will very likely refuse to eat them. And I would probably be correct.

In the early years of psychological science, there was an untested assumption that this correspondence between attitude and behavior was generally true, whether the subject of the attitude was vegetable preferences or opinions regarding other people (social attitudes). Consequently, it was quite common for psychologists and sociologists to measure attitudes through the use of questionnaires, and then assume that the measured attitude would be reflected in future behavior when the attitude object is actually encountered.

LaPiere questioned this assumption, particularly as it pertained to social attitudes. To illustrate his criticism, he used the example of a researcher asking American men the question, "Would you get up to give an Armenian woman your seat in a streetcar?" (Remember, this article was published in 1934!) Whatever the answer, LaPiere explained, the response would only be a symbolic (or hypothetical) response to a symbolic situation, and would not necessarily predict what a man would actually do if faced with a real Armenian woman on a real crowded streetcar. Even so, most researchers would, according to LaPiere, be quite willing to suggest that they could predict the respondents' actual behavior from the symbolic attitude as measured by the answer to the hypothetical question. Not only that, but the same researchers might even draw conclusions about the overall relationship between Americans and Armenians based on the same data. LaPiere argued that the assumption researchers were making of a direct correspondence between symbolic behavior (responses on questionnaires) and real behavior was far too simple, unwarranted, and probably wrong.

Throughout the following discussion of LaPiere's famous study, it is important to keep in mind that in the 1930s, there was a great deal of racial and ethnic prejudice and discrimination in American society. This is not to say that such attitudes do not exist today, but 60 years ago discriminatory practices were generally more widespread, blatant, and accepted. For example, it was a common practice for hotels and restaurants to have policies refusing service to members of certain racial or ethnic groups. LaPiere decided to capitalize on such discriminatory policies to test his idea that spoken attitudes are often poor predictors of actual behavior.

THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

During 1930 and 1931, LaPiere traveled extensively with a young Chinese student and his wife. "Both were personable, charming, quick to win the admiration and respect of those with whom they had the opportunity to become intimate" (p. 231). There was in the United States then a great deal of prejudice and discrimination toward anyone of Asian descent. Because of this, LaPiere reported feeling quite apprehensive when, early in their trip, the three of them approached the clerk in the best hotel "in a small town

noted for its narrow and bigoted attitude toward Orientals" (p. 231). So he was surprised when they all were immediately and politely accommodated. LaPiere went on to explain, "Two months later I passed that way again, phoned the hotel, and asked if they would accommodate 'an important Chinese gentleman.' The reply was an unequivocal 'No.' That aroused my curiosity and led to this study" (p. 232).

The theory implied in LaPiere's study was that, contrary to prevailing beliefs, people's *social actions* track very poorly with their spoken social attitudes. In other words, what people say is often not what they do.

METHOD

This study was conducted in two distinctly separate parts. The first part focused on actual behavior, while the second assessed related symbolic attitudes.

Real Behavior Phase

LaPiere and his Chinese friends traveled by car twice across the United States as well as up and down the full length of the Pacific Coast. Their journey totaled approximately 10,000 miles. From a careful examination of LaPiere's article, it appears that his research on attitudes was not the purpose of the trip, but rather was coincidental. For one thing, LaPiere did not inform the Chinese couple that he was making careful observations of the treatment they received wherever they went. His justification for this was that had they known, they might have become self-conscious and altered their behavior in some way that would have made the study less valid.

Between 1930 and 1933, the travelers approached 67 hotels, auto camps, and tourist homes (whatever those were) for accommodations. They ate at 184 restaurants and cafés. LaPiere kept detailed records of the responses of hotel clerks, bell boys, elevator operators, and waitresses to the presence of the Chinese couple. So that reactions would not be unduly altered because of his presence, LaPiere often let the Chinese couple secure the room or other accommodations while he took care of the luggage, and whenever possible he allowed them to enter restaurants before him. The treatment the Chinese couple received will be discussed in detail shortly.

Symbolic Behavior Phase

In the second part of the study, LaPiere mailed questionnaires to all of the establishments they had visited. He allowed six months to pass between the actual visit and the mailing of the questionnaire. His reason for this delay was to allow the effect of the Chinese couple's visit to fade.

The question of primary interest on the questionnaire was, "Will you accept members of the Chinese race as guests in your establishment?" These questionnaires were returned by 81 of the restaurants and cafés and 47 of the lodging establishments. This was a response rate of 51%.

To ensure that the questionnaire responses were not directly influenced by the Chinese couple's visit, LaPiere also obtained responses to the

same questionnaire from 32 hotels and 96 restaurants located in the same regions of the country, but not visited by the travelers.

So, after nearly three years, LaPiere had the data necessary to make a comparison of social attitudes with social behavior.

RESULTS

LaPiere reported that of the 251 hotels and restaurants they patronized on their travels, there was only one instance in which they were denied service because of the ethnicity of his companions. This single rejection, in a small California town, was described by LaPiere as occurring at a *rather inferior auto camp.* The proprietor came toward the car and upon seeing the occupants said, "No. I don't take Japs!" This ugly experience aside, most of their other experiences involved average or even above-average treatment, although at times the treatment was altered due to *curiosity* about the Chinese couple. LaPiere explained that in 1930, outside the Pacific Coast region, Chicago, and New York, most people in the United States had little experience with, and perhaps had never even seen, people of Asian heritage. Table 1 summarizes LaPiere's ratings of the service they received. As you can see, in all but a very few establishments, the service they received was rated by LaPiere to be the same as or better than what he would have expected if he had been traveling alone.

The responses to the questionnaires mailed to the establishments six months later and those mailed to the places not visited are summarized in Table 2. Nearly all (over 90%) of the hotels, campgrounds, tourist homes, restaurants, and cafés visited by LaPiere and the Chinese couple replied that they would not serve Chinese individuals! In addition, the distribution of responses from the establishments not visited were virtually the same, indicating that the findings were not somehow caused by the travelers' recent visit. On the contrary, the one "Yes" response to the questionnaire came from the manager of a small auto camp who enclosed a "chatty letter describing the

TABLE 1 LaPiere's Ratings of Service Received

QUALITY OF RECEPTION	LODGINGS	RESTAURANTS AND CAFÉS
Very much better than expected if investigator had been alone	25	72
Good, but different because of increased curiosity	25	82
Equal to normal expectations	11	24
Perceptibly hesitant for racial reasons	4	5
Definitely, but temporarily, embarrassing	1	1
Not accepted	1	0
Total	67	184

TABLE 2 Number of Questionnaire Responses to Question: Will You Accept Members of the Chinese Race as Guests in Your Establishment?

ANSWER	LODGINGS VISITED	RESTAURANTS VISITED	LODGINGS NOT VISITED	RESTAURANTS NOT VISITED
No	43	75	30	76
Undecided, depends on circumstances	3	6	2	7
Yes	1	0	0	1

(adapted from p. 234)

nice visit she had had with a Chinese gentleman and his sweet wife during the previous summer" (p. 234).

DISCUSSION

LaPiere's discussion of his findings focused on the lack of validity of questionnaires in determining a person's true attitude. He contended that "it is impossible to make direct comparisons between the reactions secured through questionnaires and from actual experience" (p. 234). He pointed out that if a Chinese person were to consult the findings of the questionnaire prior to setting out on a tour of the United States (in 1930), he would undoubtedly decide to stay home! However, LaPiere's friends enjoyed an almost discrimination-free trip and became increasingly confident about approaching new social situations without fear of rejection or embarrassment.

So was LaPiere suggesting that we eliminate the use of questionnaires altogether? No. He suggested that such data might be useful in determining people's symbolic attitudes about issues that would remain symbolic. For example, he allowed that questionnaires could measure political attitudes, but this information would provide little information about how people will vote or behave if they meet a candidate on the street or at a party. Another example of an acceptable use of questionnaire data was the measurement of religious attitudes. LaPiere pointed out that "an honest answer to the question 'Do you believe in God?' reveals all there is to be measured. 'God' is a symbol; 'belief,' a verbal expression" (p. 235).

His conclusion was that if you want to predict how someone will behave when actually faced with a certain situation or another person, a verbal reaction to a symbolic situation (that is, an attitude questionnaire) is wholly inadequate. He contended that social attitudes can only be reliably measured by studying human behavior in actual social situations. His article ended with what might be interpreted as a warning to other researchers:

> The questionnaire is cheap, easy, and mechanical. The study of human behavior is time-consuming, intellectually fatiguing, and depends for its success on the ability of the investigator. The former method gives quantitative results, the latter mainly qualitative. . . . Yet it would seem far more worthwhile to

> make a shrewd guess regarding that which is essential than to accurately measure that which is likely to prove quite irrelevant. (p. 237)

CRITICISMS, SUBSEQUENT RESEARCH, AND RECENT APPLICATIONS

It seems that psychologists reacted to LaPiere's findings almost as an athlete would react to being challenged to a competition. A great deal of research was generated, and this response took three directions. First, there have been several strong criticisms leveled at LaPiere's findings. Second, researchers set about trying to determine why attitude assessments fail to predict actual behavior. And third, behavioral scientists have attempted to determine the conditions under which attitude measurements will reliably predict behavior.

LaPiere's methods were criticized on the basis that a simple yes-no answer to a question in a letter is not a valid measurement of a person's attitude regarding a specific group of people. For example, the image of *members of the Chinese race* in the minds of the respondents may have been very different from the Chinese couple they actually encountered. Another criticism has been that only half of the places the three travelers visited responded to the questionnaire. It is possible that those who took the time to respond may have been the ones with the strongest prejudicial attitudes against Asians. Finally, after six months, there was the possibility that the person responding to the letter was not the same person who met the travelers face to face.

However, nearly 40 years after LaPiere's findings, another researcher reviewed the research that had accumulated over the years and concluded that the correlation between measured attitudes and actual behavior was indeed weak and perhaps nonexistent (Wicker, 1971). Many researchers have focused their attention on trying to determine why this inconsistency exists. Many reasons have been proposed (see Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, for a complete discussion), but only a few of them will be discussed here.

First, you have many attitudes that may compete with each other. Which attitude will exert the most influence on your behavior depends on the specifics of the situation. Second, there are times when you might behave in ways that are contrary to your attitudes because you have no alternative, such as situations in which your job or a friendship depends on a certain action. Third, social pressures and the human desire to avoid embarrassment can exert strong influences that may produce behaviors that are inconsistent with attitudes.

So this question remained: When, if ever, will attitude measurements be successful in predicting behavior? Recently, there has been a major research effort to identify the factors that produce greater consistency between attitudes and behavior. These factors can be summarized into the following five categories (see Taylor, Peplau, & Sears, 1997):

1. *Strength of the attitude.* The stronger you feel toward certain people or situations, the more likely you are to behave accordingly when you

encounter them in person. On the other hand, weak or ambivalent attitudes may exert little or no influence on your behavior.

2. *Stability of the attitude.* This factor deals with how your attitudes change over time. Attitudes that are stable predict behavior better than those that change with time. Measuring voters' attitudes about a candidate three weeks prior to an election may tell you very little about voting behavior three weeks later. Ideally, for an accurate attitude-behavior connection they should be measured at nearly the same time.
3. *Relevance of attitude to the behavior.* If you measure someone's attitude about sports, it is likely to be a poor predictor of how often they attend athletic events. Some early studies asked people if they believed in God, and then tried to use their answers to predict their attendance in church. It didn't work. This implies that attitudes will predict behavior much better if the attitude measured relates exactly to the behavior of interest. To demonstrate this, one study asked a group of college women about their attitudes toward birth control and asked another similar group about their attitudes toward using birth control pills during the next two years. The correlation between the measured attitude and actual use of birth control pills during the following two years was .08 (nonsignificant) for the first group, but .57 (highly significant) for the specific-attitude group (Davidson & Jaccard, 1979).
4. *Salience of the attitude.* If an attitude you hold toward something or someone is salient, it is conspicuous, important, and readily accessed from your memory. The more salient the attitude, the more likely it will predict your behavior. Suppose you have a positive attitude about the act of donating blood. If a friend or family member has recently had surgery that required a lot of blood, your attitude about giving blood is probably much more salient than usual. Under these circumstances, you are more likely to give blood than at other times, even though the attitude itself did not change.
5. *Situational pressures.* Sometimes the external pressures that exist in a particular situation are so strong that your internal attitude will have little effect on your behavior. For example, imagine a new stop sign has recently been installed at a corner near your home. You believe that the stop sign is totally unnecessary because there is very little traffic on those streets and it is easy to see oncoming cars in all directions. To you, the stop sign is a nuisance, so you usually just roll right through it. This week, however, there is a police car parked at the corner everyday. Suddenly, your internal attitude toward the sign loses all its power and your behavior falls under the influence of the situation: you come to a full stop every time. Can you see how this concept could explain LaPiere's findings? When the various proprietors in the study were faced with a nicely dressed couple asking for food or lodging, the situational pressures to accommodate them were very strong and may have prevailed over their internal racist attitudes.

LaPiere's research of more than 65 years ago continues to be cited in studies of attitude-behavior connections and prejudice and discrimination. One fascinating study incorporated LaPiere's ideas in an exploration into the effects of attending psychic readings on people's belief in paranormal or *extrasensory* phenomena (Roe, 1998). The researcher tested the popular notion that the development of an unquestioning belief in paranormal events stems from direct, convincing personal experiences with psychic readings and predictions. More than 300 subjects were surveyed about their experiences with psychics. Nearly a third of the respondents reported that they had attended at least one psychic reading. Findings confirmed that most of these respondents were indeed impressed with the psychic and found the information contained in the reading to be accurate, specific, and personally valuable. However—and this is the main point—few of the subjects made any significant changes in their behaviors or attitudes based on the psychic's predictions. This leads to the obvious conclusion that, although many people claim to have faith in psychics, that faith is not so great that they would bet real-life behavior on a psychic's advice.

A new word related to attitude-behavior research has crept into the American English vocabulary over the past 10 years or so: *NIMBY.* This is an acronym for *not in my back yard.* The context in which the NIMBY concept usually appears is when an event, a project, or an environmental change of some sort is under consideration. Often the issue receives widespread support, and many people agree that the project will serve the public good. However, when it appears that such an undertaking may affect them personally, they become emphatically opposed to it. In other words, "It's a great idea, but *not in my back yard!*" A frequent example of the NIMBY attitude-behavior discrepancy relates to nuclear waste dumps. Most people agree that such radioactive waste should be disposed of safely in sealed underground storage facilities. However, just try to find a place where the local residents will allow such a facility to be built. NIMBY! This concept has broad applications for psychological services and public health initiatives. A study by Zsambok, Hammer, and Rojahn (1999), called "Put Your Money Where Your Mouth Is," assessed the attitudes of residents to a proposal to open a group home for mentally retarded individuals in the neighborhood. Some residents responded to a survey in which they expressed agreement with the need for such facilities. Other, however, were asked to sign a petition in favor of opening such a facility nearby. You've already guessed the results, haven't you? The correlation between the two measures was very low, demonstrating that the survey did a very poor job of predicting the petition responses.

CONCLUSION

The research on attitudes and behavior constitutes a huge body of literature, of which only a minuscule sample has been included here. Behavioral scientists may never unravel all the complexities of this relationship, but the research continues. As theories and methods have been refined and

perfected over the years, evidence has increased to suggest that our attitudes do play an important role in determining our behavior. It is no longer a question of whether attitudes predict behavior, but exactly how and when they do so. What is most important in the present context is that the beginning of all this interest in the attitude-behavior connection began with a single study by LaPiere more than a half-century ago.

Davidson, A., & Jaccard, J. (1979). Variables that modulate the attitude-behavior relation: Results of a longitudinal survey. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 37,* 1364–1376.

Fishbein, M., & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention, and behavior: An introduction to the theory and research.* Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Roe, C. (1998). Belief in the paranormal and attendance at psychic readings. *Journal of the American Society for Psychical Research, 92*(1), 25–51.

Taylor, S., Peplau, L., & Sears, D. (1997). *Social psychology* (9th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Wicker, A. (1971). Attitudes vs. action: The relationship between verbal and overt behavior responses to attitude objects. *Journal of Social Issues, 25,* 41–78.

Zsambok, J., Hammer, D., & Rojahn, J. (1999). Put your money where your mouth is: Direct and indirect measures of attitude community integration. *American Journal on Mental Health Retardation, 104*(1), 88–92.

THE POWER OF CONFORMITY

Asch, S. E. (1955). Opinions and social pressure. *Scientific American, 193,* 31–35.

Do you consider yourself to be a conformist, or are you more of a nonconformist? Most of us probably like to think that we are conformist enough to not be considered terribly strange or frightening, and nonconformist enough to demonstrate that we are individuals and capable of independent thinking. Psychologists have been interested in the concept of conformity for decades. It is easy to see why, when you remember that psychology tries to study the influences on human behavior. The differences in the amount to which people conform can help us a great deal in predicting the behavior for various individuals.

When psychologists talk about conformity, they refer to an individual's behavior that adheres to the behavior patterns of a particular group of which that individual is a member. The usually unspoken rules or guidelines for behavior in a group are called *social norms.* If you think about it, you can probably remember a time in your life when you behaved in ways that were out of sync or in disagreement with your attitudes, beliefs, or morals. Chances are you were in a group in which everyone was behaving that way, so you went along with them. This indicates that sometimes conformity is a powerful force on our behavior and can even at times make us do things that conflict with our attitudes, ethics, and morals. Therefore, conformity is clearly very worthy of interest and study by behavioral scientists. It was not until the early 1950s that someone

decided to make a systematic study. That someone was Solomon Asch. His experiments offered us a great deal of new information about conforming behavior and opened many doors for future research.

THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

Suppose you are with a group of people that you see often, such as friends or coworkers. The group is discussing some controversial issue or political candidate. It quickly becomes clear to you that everyone in the group shares one view, which is the opposite of your own. At one point the others turn to you and ask for your opinion. What are you going to do? The choices you are faced with are to state your true views and risk the consequences; to agree with the group consensus even though it differs from your opinion; or, if possible, to sidestep the issue entirely.

Asch wanted to find out just how powerful the need to conform is in influencing our behavior. Although conformity often involves general and vague concepts such as attitudes, ethics, morals, and belief systems, Asch chose to focus on a much more obvious form: perceptual conformity. By examining conforming behavior on a simple visual comparison task, he was able to study this phenomenon in a controlled laboratory environment.

If conformity is as powerful a force as Asch and many others believed, then researchers should be able to manipulate a person's behavior by applying group pressure to conform. This is what Asch set about testing in a very elegantly designed series of experiments, all incorporating a similar method.

METHOD

The visual materials consisted simply of pairs of cards with three different lengths of vertical lines (called comparison lines) on one and a single standard line the same length as one of three comparison lines on the other (see Figure 1). Here is how the experimental process worked. Imagine you are a subject who has volunteered to participate in a *visual perception study.* You arrive at the experiment room on time and find seven other subjects already seated in a row. You sit in the empty chair at the end of the row. The experimenter reveals a pair of cards and asks you to determine which of the three comparison lines is the same length as the standard line. You look at the lines and immediately decide on the correct response. Starting at the

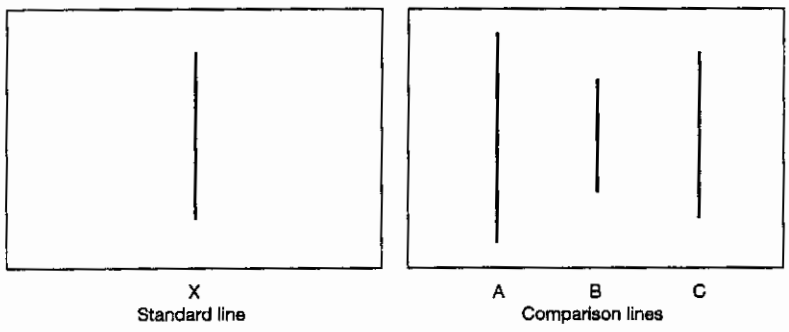

FIGURE 1 An example similar to Asch's line judging task cards. (adapted from p. 32)

far end of the row away from you, each subject is asked individually for his or her answer. Everyone gives the correct answer, and when your turn comes you give the same obviously correct answer. The card is changed, the same process happens, and—once again, no problem—you give the correct answer along with the rest of the group. On the next trial, however, something odd happens. The card is revealed and you immediately choose in your mind the correct response. (After all, this is not difficult.) But when the other subjects give their answers, they all choose the wrong line! And they all choose the same wrong line. Now, when it is your turn to respond again, you pause. You can't believe what is happening. Are all these other people blind? The correct answer is obvious. Isn't it? Have you gone blind? Or crazy? You now must make a decision like the one described above with your friends or coworkers. Do you maintain your opinion (after all, the lines are right in front of your nose), or do you conform and agree with the rest of the group?

As you have probably figured out by now, the other seven *subjects* in the room were not subjects at all, but confederates of the experimenter. They were in on the experiment from the beginning and the answers they gave were, of course, the key to this study of conformity. So, how did the real subjects in the study answer?

RESULTS

Each subject participated in the experimental situation several times. Approximately 75% of them went along with the group's consensus at least once. For all trials combined, subjects agreed with the group on the incorrect responses about one-third of the time. Just to be sure that the line lengths could be judged accurately, each individual in a control group of subjects was asked to individually write down his or her answer to the line comparison questions. Subjects in this group were correct 98% of the time.

DISCUSSION AND RELATED RESEARCH

The powerful effects of group pressures to conform were clearly demonstrated in Asch's study. If individuals are willing to conform to a group of people they hardly know about a clearly incorrect judgment, how strong must this influence be in real life, where groups exert even stronger forces and issues are more ambiguous? Conformity as a major factor in human behavior, the subject of widespread speculation for years, had now been scientifically established.

Asch's results were extremely important to the field of psychology in two crucial ways. First, as discussed above, the real power of the social pressure to conform was demonstrated clearly and scientifically for the first time. Second, and perhaps even more important, this early research sparked a huge wave of additional studies that continue right up to the present. The body of research that has accumulated since Asch's early studies has greatly elaborated our knowledge of the specific factors that determine the effects conformity has on our behavior. Some of these findings follow:

1. *Social support.* Asch conducted his same experiment with a slight variation. He altered the answers of the confederates so that in the test condition one of the seven gave the correct answer. When this occurred, only 5% of the subjects agreed with the group consensus. Apparently, a single ally is all you need to "stick to your guns" and resist the pressure to conform. This finding has been supported by several later studies (see, for example, Morris & Miller, 1975).
2. *Attraction and commitment to the group.* Later research has demonstrated that the more attracted and committed you are to a particular group, the more likely you are to conform to the behavior and attitudes of that group (see Forsyth, 1983). If you like the group and feel that you belong with them (they are your *reference group*) your tendency to conform to that group will be very strong.
3. *Size of the group.* At first, research by Asch and others demonstrated that the tendency to conform increases as the size of the group increases. However, upon further examination, it was found that this connection is not so simple. While it is true that conformity increases as the size of the group increases, this only holds for groups up to six or seven members. As the group size increases beyond this number, conformity levels off, and even decreases somewhat. This is shown graphically in Figure 2. Why is this? Well, Asch has suggested that as the group becomes large, people may begin to suspect the other members of working together purposefully to affect their behavior and they become resistant to this obvious pressure.
4. *Sex.* Do you think there is a difference between men and women in their tendency or willingness to conform? Early studies that followed Asch's work indicated that women seemed to be much more willing to conform than men. This was such a strong and frequently repeated finding that it entered the psychological literature as an accepted difference between the sexes. However, later research drew this notion into question. It appears that many of the early studies (conducted by men) inadvertently created testing conditions that were more familiar and comfortable for men in those days than for women. Psychologists know that people will tend to conform more when

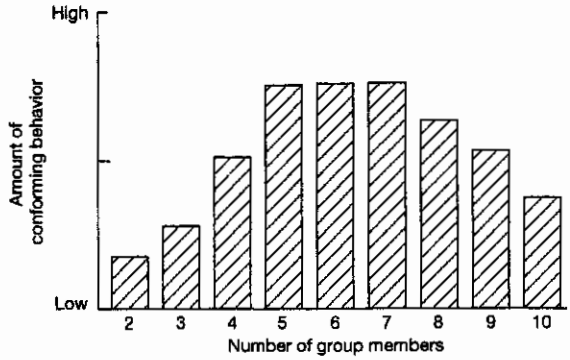

FIGURE 2 The relationship between group size and conformity. (adapted from p. 35)

placed in a situation where the appropriate behavior is unclear. Therefore, the finding of greater conformity among women may have simply been a systematic error caused by subtle (and unintentional) biases in the methods used. More recent research under better controlled conditions has failed to find this sex difference in conformity behavior (see Sistrunk & McDavid, 1971, for a discussion of these gender-related issues).

There are other areas related to the issue of conformity that have been studied as well. These include, but are not limited to, cultural differences, the amount of information available when making decisions about conforming, the role of norms, the amount of privacy, and so on. Nearly all general textbooks on social psychology include a more complete discussion of these factors.

CRITICISMS

Asch's work on conformity has received widespread support and acceptance. In addition, it has been replicated in many studies under a wide variety of conditions. A line of criticism commonly heard concerns whether Asch's findings can be generalized to situations in the real world. In other words, does a subject's answer in a laboratory about the length of some lines really have very much to do with conforming behavior in life? This is a valid criticism to make for all research about human behavior that is carried out in a controlled laboratory setting. What this criticism says is "Well, maybe the subjects were willing to go along with the group on something so trivial and unimportant as the length of a line, but in real life, and on important matters, they would not conform so readily." It must be pointed out, however, that while real-life matters of conformity can certainly be more meaningful, it is equally likely that the pressures for conformity from groups in the real world are also proportionately stronger.

RECENT APPLICATIONS

An article examining why young adults continue to engage in unsafe sexual practices demonstrates how Asch's work continues to influence research on important social issues (Cerwonka, Isbell, & Hansen, 2000). Nearly 400 students between the ages of 18 and 29 were assessed on various measures of HIV/AIDS knowledge, HIV risk behaviors (failure to use condoms, casual and multiple sex partners), alcohol and other drug use, and sexual history. *Conformity to peer group norms* was one of several factors found to be predictive of HIV high-risk behaviors.

Another study used a meta-analysis methodology (see the discussion of Smith and Glass's research in the previous section for an explanation of meta-analytic research techniques) to examine numerous past studies that involved Asch's line-judging task (Bond & Smith, 1996). This study's goal was to determine if our tendency to conform has changed over time and to examine possible cultural effects on conformity. The authors found that in

the United States, conformity has declined significantly since the early 1950s, when Asch conducted his famous study. More interestingly, they also determined that culture appears to play an important role in the extent to which people conform. Conformity research done in *collectivist* countries, such as Japan or India, where the goals of the larger social group are valued over the goals of the individual, has consistently found higher levels of conformity than is seen in *individualistic* countries, such as the United States, where priority is placed on the goals of the individual over the goals of the group (see the reading on research by Triandis delineating collectivist and individualistic cultures in Chapter 7, Personality). Such findings add to the ever-growing body of evidence that psychological research must never overlook the influence of culture on virtually all human behaviors.

Bond, R., & Smith, P. (1996). Culture and conformity: A meta-analysis of studies using Asch's line-judgement task. *Psychological Bulletin, 119*(1), 111–137.

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TO HELP OR NOT TO HELP

Darley, J. M., & Latané, B. (1968). Bystander intervention in emergencies: Diffusion of responsibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 8,* 377–383.

One of the most influential events in the history of psychology and psychological research was not an experiment or a discovery made by a behavioral scientist, but a news item about a violent and tragic event in New York City that was picked up by most media news services across the United States. (This story continues to be well known due to its frequent retelling in psychology texts.) In 1964, Kitty Genovese was returning to her apartment in a quiet, middle-class neighborhood in Queens after closing the Manhattan bar that she managed. As she left her car and walked toward her building, she was viciously attacked by a man with a knife. As the man stabbed her several times, she screamed for help. One neighbor yelled out his window for the man to "leave that girl alone," at which the attacker began to walk away. But then he turned, knocked Genovese to the ground, and began stabbing her again. She continued to scream until finally someone telephoned the police. The police arrived two minutes after they were called, but Genovese was already dead and her attacker had disappeared. The attack had lasted 35 minutes. During police investigations, it was found that 38 people in the

surrounding apartments had witnessed the attack, but only one had eventually called the police. One couple (who said they assumed the police had been called by someone) had moved two chairs next to their window in order to watch the violence. The murderer was never found.

If someone had acted sooner to help Genovese, she probably would have survived. New York City and the nation were appalled by the seeming lack of caring on the part of so many neighbors who had failed to try to stop this violent act. People attempted to find a reason for this inaction. The alienation caused by living in a large city was blamed; the neighborhood of Queens was blamed; basic human nature was blamed.

The Genovese tragedy sparked the interest of psychologists, who set out to try to understand what psychological forces might have been at work to prevent all those people from helping. There is an area of psychology that studies what behavioral scientists call *pro-social behavior,* or behavior that produces positive social consequences. Topics falling into this research area include altruism, cooperation, resisting temptation, and helping. If you witness an emergency situation in which someone may be in need of help, there are many factors that affect your decision to step in and offer assistance. John Darley at New York University and Bibb Latané at Columbia, both social psychologists, were among those who wanted to examine these factors. They termed the behavior of helping in emergencies, *bystander intervention* (or in this case, nonintervention).

Have you ever been faced with a true emergency? Contrary to what you may think from watching television and reading newspapers, emergencies are not very common. Darley and Latané estimated that the average person will encounter fewer than six emergencies in a lifetime. This is good and bad: good for obvious reasons; bad because if and when you find yourself facing an emergency, you will have to decide what to do, without the benefit of very much experience. Society dictates that we take action to help in emergencies, but often, as in the famous Genovese case, we do not. Why is this? Could it be because we have so little experience that we do not know what to do? Is it because of the alienation caused by urban living? Or are humans, by nature, basically uncaring?

Following the Genovese murder, Darley and Latané analyzed the bystanders' reactions. They theorized that the large number of people who witnessed the violent event, decreased the willingness of individuals to step in and help. They decided to test their theory experimentally.

THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

Your common sense might tell you that the more bystanders there are in an emergency, the more likely someone will intervene. But Darley and Latané hypothesized just the opposite. They believed that the reason no one took steps to help Kitty Genovese was a phenomenon they called *diffusion of responsibility.* That is, as the number of bystanders in an emergency increases, the greater is the belief that "someone else will help, so I don't need to." Have you ever witnessed an accident on a busy street or arrived at the scene of one

soon after it has happened? Chances are that as you drove by you made the assumption that someone surely has called the police or ambulance by now, and therefore you did not feel the personal responsibility to do so. But imagine discovering the same accident on a deserted country road with no one else around. Would your response be different? So would mine!

The concept of diffusion of responsibility formed the theoretical basis for this chapter's study. The trick was to re-create a Genovese-like situation in the laboratory so that it could be manipulated and examined systematically. Darley and Latané were very ingenious in designing an experiment to do this.

METHOD

For obvious reasons, it would not be practical or even possible to reproduce the events of the Kitty Genovese murder for experimental purposes. Therefore, a situation needed to be devised that would approximate or simulate a true emergency so that the intervention of bystanders could be observed. In this experiment, Darley and Latané told students in an introductory psychology class at New York University that they were interested in studying how students adjust to university life in a highly competitive, urban environment and what kinds of personal problems they were experiencing. The students were asked to discuss their problems honestly with other students, but to avoid any discomfort or embarrassment, they would be in separate rooms and would speak with each other over an intercom system. This intercom, they were told, would only allow one student to speak at a time. Each student would be given two minutes, after which the microphone for the next student would be activated for two minutes, and so on.

All of this was a cover story designed to obtain natural behavior from the subjects and to hide the true purpose of the experiment. The most important part of this cover story was the way the students were divided into three different experimental conditions. The subjects in group 1 believed that they would be talking with only one other person; those in group 2 believed there would be two other people on the intercom; and the group 3 subjects were told that there were five other people on the line. In reality, each subject was alone and all the other voices were on tape.

Now that the size of the groups was varied, some sort of emergency had to be created. The researchers decided that a very realistically acted epileptic seizure would be interpreted by most people as an emergency. As the discussions over the intercom system between the subjects and the other "students" began, subjects heard the first student, a male, tell about his difficulties concentrating on his studies and problems adjusting to life in New York City. He then added, with some embarrassment, that he sometimes had severe seizures, especially when under a lot of stress. Then the conversation switched to the next student. In group 1, the actual subject's turn came next, whereas in the other two conditions, the subject heard one or more other students speak before his or her turn. After the subject spoke it was the first student's turn again. This is when the emergency occurred. The first student spoke normally as before, but then began to have a seizure (remember, this

was all on tape). Latané and Darley quote the seizure in detail in a later report as follows:

> I-er-um-I think I-I need-er-if-if could-er-er somebody er-er-er-er-er-er give me a little-er-give me a little help here because-er-I-er-I'm-er-h-h-having a-a-a real problem-er right now and I-er-if somebody could help me out it would-it would-er-er s-s-sure be good . . . because-er-there-er-ag cause I er-I-uh-I've got one of the-er-sei—er-er-things coming on and-and-and I could really use some help so if somebody would-er give me a little h-help-uh-er-er-er-er c-ould somebody-er er-help-er-uh-uh-uh [choking sounds] . . . I'm gonna die-er-er . . . help-er-er-seizure [chokes, then quiet]. (pp. 95–96)

To the subjects, this was clearly an emergency. There was no question that the "student" was in trouble and needed help immediately. In order to analyze the responses of the subjects, Darley and Latané measured the percentage of subjects in each condition who helped the student in trouble (helping was defined as leaving the cubicle and notifying the experimenter of the problem). They also measured the amount of time it took subjects to respond to the emergency and try to help. Subjects were given four minutes to respond, after which the experiment was terminated.

RESULTS

The findings from this study offered strong support for the researchers' hypothesis. As subjects believed there were a greater number of others present, the percentage who reported the seizure *quickly,* that is, as the attack was occurring, decreased dramatically (see Figure 1). Among those who *eventually* helped, the amount of delay in helping was greater when more bystanders were present. For group 1, the average delay in responding was less than one minute, whereas for group 3 it was over three minutes. Finally, the total number of subjects who reported the seizure at all, either during or after it occurred, varied among the groups in a similar way. *All* of the subjects in group 1 reported the emergency, but only 85% of group 2 and 60% of group 3 did so *at any time* during the four-minute period.

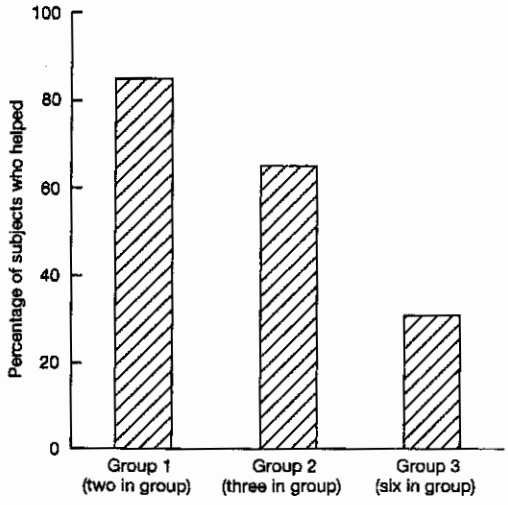

FIGURE 1 Number of subjects in each condition who helped quickly *during* seizure. (adapted from data on p. 380)

DISCUSSION

As in the real-life case of Kitty Genovese, you might think that the subjects in this study were simply uncaring toward the victim having the seizure. However, Darley and Latané are quick to point out that this was not the reason for the inaction of subjects in groups 2 and 3 (or of Genovese's neighbors). All the subjects reported experiencing a great deal of anxiety and discomfort during the attack and showed physical signs of nervousness (trembling hands, sweaty palms). The researchers concluded, therefore, that the reason for their results must lie in the difference in the number of other people the subjects believed were present. Whenever your behavior is changed because of the presence of others, this is called *social influence.* Obviously, social influence played a significant role in this study. But we are still left wondering why. What was it about the presence of others that was so influential?

Well, Darley and Latané claimed to have demonstrated and supported their theory of diffusion of responsibility. As the number of people in the group increased, the subject felt less personal or individual responsibility to take action. It was easier in groups 2 and 3 for the subjects to assume that someone else would handle the problem. In a related point, it is not only the responsibility for helping that is shared when others are present, but also the potential guilt or blame for not helping. Since helping others is considered to be a positive action in our culture, refusing or failing to help carries shameful connotations. If you are the only person present in an emergency, the negative consequences of not helping will be much greater than if others are there to bear some of the burden for nonintervention.

Another possible explanation for this type of social influence is something that psychologists have termed *evaluation apprehension.* Darley and Latané contended that part of the reason we fail to help when others are present is that we are afraid of being embarrassed or ridiculed. Imagine how foolish you would feel if you were to spring into action to help someone who did not need or want your help. I remember a time when, as a teenager, I was swimming with a large group of friends at a neighbor's pool. As I was about to dive from the board I saw the neighbor's 13-year-old daughter lying face down on the bottom of the pool. I looked around and no one else seemed to be aware of or concerned about this apparent emergency. Was she drowning? Was she joking? I wasn't sure. Just as I was about to yell for help and dive in for the rescue, she swam lazily to the surface. I had hesitated a full 30 seconds out of the fear of being wrong. Many of us have had experiences such as this. The problem is they teach us the wrong thing: that helping behavior carries with it the possibility of looking foolish.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FINDINGS

From this and other studies, Darley and Latané became the leading researchers in the field of helping behavior and bystander intervention. Much of their early work is included in their book *The Unresponsive Bystander: Why Doesn't He Help?* (Latané & Darley, 1970). In this work, they outline a model

for helping behavior that has become widely accepted in the psychological literature on helping. They proposed that there are five steps you would go through before intervening in an emergency:

1. You, the potential helper, must first notice that an event is occurring. In the study this chapter examines, there was no question that such notice would occur, but in the real world, you may be in a hurry or your attention may be focused elsewhere, and you might completely fail to notice the event.
2. Next, you must interpret the situation as one in which help is truly needed. This is a point at which fear of embarrassment exerts its influence. Again, in the present study, the situation was not ambiguous and the need for help was quite clear. In reality, however, most potential emergencies contain some degree of doubt or ambiguity, such as in my swimming pool example. Or, imagine you see a man stagger and pass out on a busy city sidewalk. Is he sick or just drunk? How you interpret the situation will influence your decision to intervene. Many of those who failed to help in the Genovese case claimed that they thought it was a lover's quarrel and did not want to get involved.
3. You have to assume personal responsibility. This will usually happen immediately if you are the only bystander in the emergency. If others are also present, however, you may instead place the responsibility on them. This step was the focus of this chapter's experiment. The more people present in an emergency, the more diffused the responsibility, and the less likely help will occur.
4. If you assume responsibility, you then must decide what action to take. Here, if you do not know what to do or you do not feel capable of taking the appropriate action, you will be less likely to help. In our present study, this issue of competence did not play a part, since all that the subject had to do was report the seizure to the experimenter. But if a crowd were to witness a pedestrian run over by a car, a member of the group who was a doctor, a nurse, or a paramedic would be more likely to intervene because he or she would know what to do.
5. Finally, after you've decided what action to take, you have to take it. Just because you know what to do doesn't guarantee that you will do it. Now you will weigh the costs and benefits of helping. Are you willing to personally intervene in a fight in which one or both of the participants has a knife? What about victims of accidents—can you help them, or will you make things worse by trying to help (the competence issue again)? If you get involved, can you be sued? What if you try to help and end up looking like a fool? Many such questions, depending on the situation, may run through your mind before you actually take action.

Figure 2 illustrates how helping behavior may be short-circuited or prevented at any one of these stages.

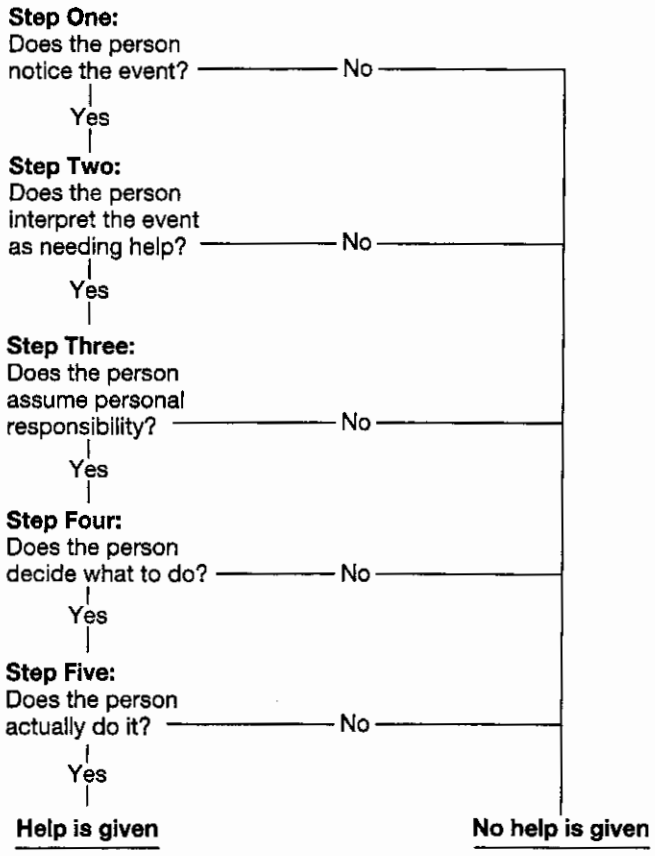

FIGURE 2 Latané and Darley's model of helping.

SUBSEQUENT FINDINGS AND RECENT APPLICATIONS

Both the Kitty Genovese murder and the experiment we have been discussing here involved groups of onlookers who were out of contact with each other. What do you suppose would happen if the bystanders could see and talk to each other? Perhaps they could analyze the emergency, decide on ways of dividing up the helping action, and encourage each other to help. Also, since helping others is expected in our culture, we might expect that when other people could watch and judge each other, they would be more likely to *do the right thing* and intervene. However, Darley and Latané believed that in some cases even groups in close contact would be less likely than individuals to help. This would be especially true, they theorized, when the emergency is somewhat ambiguous.

Imagine you are sitting in a waiting room and smoke begins to stream in through a vent. You become concerned and look around at the others in the room. Everyone else appears quite calm and unconcerned. Through a process known as *social comparison,* you decide your reaction to the smoke must be exaggerated, and you decide against taking any action. Why? Because if you take action and are wrong (maybe it wasn't smoke, just vapor from the air conditioner), you fear ridicule and embarrassment, as discussed earlier. What you don't realize is that everyone in the room is feeling the same as you and hiding it, just as you are, to avoid embarrassment! So

everyone is comparing their reaction with everyone else's, and no one is doing anything about the smoke. Sound unbelievable? Well, it's not.

Latané and Darley (1968) tested this idea in a slightly later study by creating the situation just described. Psychology students volunteered to participate in interviews to "discuss some of the problems involved in life at an urban university." When they arrived for the interview, they were seated in a room and asked to fill out a preliminary questionnaire. After a few minutes, smoke began to pour into the room through a vent. The smoke was a special mixture of chemicals that would not be dangerous to the subjects. After several minutes, the smoke became so thick that vision in the room was obscured. Subjects were timed to see how long they would wait to report the smoke to the experimenter. Some of the subjects were in the room alone; others were with two confederates, believed by the subject to be other participants, who behaved very passively when the smoke appeared; and still other subjects were in the room in groups of three. Once again, Latané and Darley's results supported their theory. Fifty-five percent of the subjects in the alone condition reported the smoke within the first two minutes, while only 12% of the subjects in the other two groups did so. Moreover, after four minutes 75% of the alone group had acted, but no additional subjects in the other groups ever reported the smoke.

Beyond their specific findings, Darley and Latané's ground-breaking research on helping behavior and diffusion of responsibility continues to influence a wide array of studies on very topical issues. For example, an article appearing in a journal devoted to psychological issues in adolescence employed Darley and Latané's model to bullying among elementary school students (O'Connell, Pepler, & Craig, 1999). Specifically, the researchers wanted to study the involvement of peers in situations where one child is bullying another. The questions they asked was, Would children reinforce the bully's behavior or intervene on behalf of the victim? Unfortunately, the findings were not what you might have hoped. "Peers spent 54% of their time reinforcing bullies by passively watching, 21% of their time actively modeling bullies, and 25% of their time intervening on behalf of the victims" (p. 437). Overall girls were significantly more likely to intervene than boys. Also older boys (grades 4–6) were more likely to join in on the bullying than younger boys (grades 1–3). The authors concluded that peer bystanders play a pivotal role in perpetuating the age-old problem of school bullies. This finding suggests that we might be more effective at reducing bullying in schools if we educate and train the children themselves on a whole-school basis so that they will be less likely to reinforce bullying behavior and more likely to come to the aid of victims.

Another indication of the viability of Darley and Latané's work is their presence on the World Wide Web. A search using any major search engine will turn up numerous documents relating to Darley and Latané, bystander intervention, helping behavior, and so on. You can explore Darley and Latané's research in greater detail at the following two excellent

Web sites: www.acjnet.org (1996) (click on *search* and enter *bystander*) and www.brunel.ac.uk/~hsstbbp/soclec5.htm (1999). The latter discusses Darley and Latané's theory of bystander intervention from the original triggering event (the Kitty Genovese murder) through various refinements of the theory to its important applications to urban stress, victimology, and crime.

CONCLUSION

The results of this research may seem rather pessimistic, but it should be stressed that this research deals with an extremely specific situation in which people fail to help. There are frequent examples of people helping other people every day, of altruistic and even heroic acts. This research is important, however, not only to explain a perplexing human behavior, but to help change it. Hopefully, as more people become aware of the bystander effect, they will make the extra effort to intervene in an emergency, even if others are present. In fact, research has actually demonstrated that when people have learned about the bystander effect, they are more likely to help in emergencies (Beaman et al., 1978). The bottom line is this: Never assume that others have intervened or will intervene in an emergency. Always act as if you are the only person there.

Beaman, A., Barnes, P., Klentz, B., & Mcquirk, B. (1978). Increasing helping rates through information dissemination: Teaching pays. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 4,* 406–411.

Latané, B., & Darley, J. M. (1968). Group inhibition of bystander intervention in emergencies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 10,* 215–221.

Latané, B., & Darley, J. M. (1970). *The unresponsive bystander: Why doesn't he help?* New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.

O'Connell, P., Pepler, D., & Craig, W. (1999). Peer involvement in bullying: Insights and challenges for intervention. *Journal of Adolescence, 22*(4), 437–452.

http://www.acjnet.org (1996)

http://www.brunel.ac.uk/~hsstbbp/soclec5.htm

OBEY AT ANY COST

Milgram, S. (1963). Behavioral study of obedience. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 67,* 371–378.

If someone in a position of authority ordered you to deliver an electrical shock of 350 volts to another person because the other person answered a question incorrectly, would you obey? Neither would I. If you met someone who was willing to do such a thing, you would probably think of him or her as cruel and sadistic. This study by Stanley Milgram of Yale University set out to examine the idea of obedience and produced some shocking and disturbing findings.

Milgram's research on obedience may be the most famous and widely recognized in all of psychology's history. It is included in every

general psychology text and every social psychology text. If you talk to students of psychology, more of them are familiar with this study than with any other. Out of this study came a book by Milgram (1974) on the psychology of obedience and a film about the research itself that is widely shown in college and university classes. Not only is this experiment referred to in discussions of obedience, but it has also been highly influential in issues of research methodology and the ethics of using human subjects in psychological research.

Milgram's idea for this project grew out of his desire to investigate scientifically how people could be capable of carrying out great harm to others simply because they were ordered to do so. Milgram was referring specifically to the hideous atrocities committed on command during World War II, and also, more generally, to the inhumanity that has been perpetrated throughout history by people following the orders of others. It appeared to Milgram that in some situations, the tendency to obey is so deeply ingrained and powerful that it cancels out a person's ability to behave morally, ethically, or even sympathetically.

When behavioral scientists decide to study some complex aspect of human behavior, their first step is to gain control over the behavioral situation so that they can approach it scientifically. This can often be the greatest challenge to a researcher, since many events in the real world are difficult to re-create in a laboratory setting. So Milgram's problem was how to cause one person to order another person to physically injure a third person without anyone actually getting injured.

THEORETICAL PROPOSITIONS

Milgram's primary theoretical basis for this study was that humans have a tendency to obey other people who are in a position of authority over them, even if, in obeying, they violate their own codes of moral and ethical behavior. He believed that, for example, many individuals who would never intentionally cause someone physical harm would inflict pain on a victim if ordered to do so by a person perceived to be a powerful authority figure.

METHOD

Probably the most ingenious portion of this study is the technique that was developed to test the power of obedience in the laboratory. Milgram designed a rather scary-looking shock generator: a large electronic device with 30 toggle switches labeled with voltage levels starting at 30 volts and increasing by 15-volt intervals up to 450 volts. These switches were labeled in groups such as *slight shock, moderate shock,* and *danger: severe shock.* The idea was that a subject could be ordered to administer electric shocks at increasing levels to another person. Please note, before you conclude that Milgram was truly sadistic himself, that this was a very realistic-looking simulated shock generator, and no one ever actually received any painful shocks.

The subjects for this study were 40 males between the ages of 20 and 50. There were 15 skilled or unskilled workers, 16 white-collar sales- or

businessmen, and nine professional men. They were recruited through newspaper ads and direct-mail solicitation asking for subjects to be paid participants in a study about memory and learning at Yale University. Each subject participated in the study individually. In order to obtain an adequate number of subjects, each was paid $4.50. (Remember, these are 1963 dollars.) All subjects were clearly told that this payment was simply for coming to the laboratory, and it was theirs to keep no matter what happened after they arrived. This was to ensure that subjects did not behave in certain ways because they were fearful of not being paid.

In addition to the subjects, there were two other key participants: a confederate in the experiment (a 47-year-old accountant) posing as another subject, and an *actor* (dressed in a gray lab coat, looking very official) playing the part of the experimenter.

As a participant arrived at the social interaction laboratory at Yale, he was seated next to another *subject* (the confederate). Obviously, the true purpose of the experiment could not be revealed to subjects, since this would completely alter their behavior. Therefore, a *cover story* was given by the experimenter, who explained to the subjects that this was a study on the effect of punishment on learning. The subjects then drew pieces of paper out of a hat to determine who would be the teacher and who would be the learner. This drawing was rigged so that the true subject always became the teacher and the accomplice was always the learner. Keep in mind that the *learner* was a confederate in the experiment, as was the person playing the part of the *experimenter.*

The learner was then taken into the next room and was, with the subject watching, strapped to a chair and wired up with electrodes (complete with electrode paste to *avoid any blisters or burns*) connected to the shock generator in the adjoining room. The learner, although his arms were strapped down, was able to reach four buttons marked *a, b, c,* and *d,* in order to answer questions posed by the teacher from the next room.

The learning task was thoroughly explained to the teacher and the learner. Briefly, it involved the learner memorizing connections between various pairs of words. It was a rather lengthy list and not an easy memory task. The teacher-subject would read the list of word pairs and then test the learner's memory of them. The teacher was instructed by the experimenter to administer an electric shock each time the learner responded incorrectly. Most important, for each incorrect response, the teacher was to move up one level of shock on the generator. All of this was simulated so realistically that no subject suspected that the shocks were not really being delivered.

The learner-confederate's responses were preprogrammed to be correct or incorrect in the same sequence for all the subjects. Furthermore, as the amount of voltage increased with incorrect responses, the learner began to shout his discomfort from the other room (in prearranged, prerecorded phrases, including the fact that his heart was bothering him), and at the 300-volt level, he pounded on the wall and demanded to be let out. After 300 volts he became completely silent and refused to answer any more

questions. The teacher was instructed to treat this lack of a response as an incorrect response and to continue the procedure.

Most of the subjects would turn to the experimenter at some point for guidance on whether to continue the shocks. When this happened, the experimenter ordered the subject to continue, in a series of commands increasing in severity as more prodding was necessary:

Command 1: Please continue.

Command 2: The experiment requires that you continue.

Command 3: It is absolutely essential that you continue.

Command 4: You have no other choice, you must go on.

A measure of obedience was obtained simply by recording the level of shock at which each subject refused to continue. Since there were 30 switches on the generator, each subject could receive a score of 0 to 30. Subjects who went all the way to the top of the scale were referred to as *obedient subjects* and those who broke off at any lower point were termed *defiant subjects.*

RESULTS

Would the subjects obey the commands of this experimenter? How high on the voltage scale did they go? What would you predict? Think of yourself, your friends, people in general. What percentage do you think would deliver shocks all the way through the 30 levels; all the way up to 450 volts—danger: severe shock? Well, before discussing the actual results of the study, Milgram asked a group of Yale University seniors, all psychology majors, as well as various colleagues to make such a prediction. The estimates ranged from 0% to 3%, with an average estimate of 1.2%. That is, no more than 3 people out of 100 were predicted to deliver the maximum shock.

Table 1 summarizes the shocking results. Upon command of the experimenter, every subject continued at least to the 300-volt level, which was when the confederate banged on the wall to be let out and stopped answering. But most surprising is the number of subjects who obeyed orders to continue all the way to the top of the scale.

Although 14 subjects defied orders and broke off before reaching the maximum voltage, 26 of the 40 subjects, or 65%, followed the experimenter's orders and proceeded to the top of the shock scale. This is not to say that the subjects were calm or happy about what they were doing. Many exhibited signs of extreme stress and concern for the man receiving the shocks, and even became angry at the experimenter. Yet they obeyed.

There was concern that some of the subjects might suffer psychological distress from having gone through the ordeal of shocking another person, especially when the learner had ceased to respond for the last third of the experiment. To help alleviate this anxiety, after the subjects finished the experiment, they received a full explanation (called a debriefing) of the true purpose of the study and of all the procedures, including the deception that had been employed. In addition, the subjects were interviewed as to

TABLE 1 Level of Shock Delivered by Subjects

NUMBER OF VOLTS TO BE DELIVERED	NUMBER WHO REFUSED TO CONTINUE AT THIS LEVEL
Slight shock	
15	0
30	0
45	0
60	0
Moderate shock	
75	0
90	0
105	0
120	0
Strong shock	
135	0
150	0
165	0
180	0
Very strong shock	
195	0
210	0
225	0
240	0
Intense shock	
255	0
270	0
285	0
300	5
Extreme intensity shock	
315	4
330	2
345	1
360	1
Danger: severe shock	
375	1
390	0
405	0
420	0
XXX— — —	
435	0
450	26

(from Milgram, 1963, p. 376)

their feelings and thoughts during the procedure and the confederate "learner" was brought in for a friendly reconciliation with each subject.

DISCUSSION

Milgram's discussion of his findings focused on two main points. The first was the surprising strength of the subjects' tendency to obey. These were average, normal people who agreed to participate in an experiment about

learning, not sadistic, cruel individuals in any way. Milgram points out that from childhood these subjects had learned that it is immoral to hurt others against their will. So, why did they do so? The experimenter was a person in a position of authority, but if you think about it, how much authority did he really have? He had no power to enforce his orders, and subjects would lose nothing by refusing to follow orders. Clearly the situation carried a force of its own that somehow made obedience significantly greater than was expected.

The second key observation made during the course of this study was the extreme tension and anxiety manifested by the subjects as they obeyed the experimenter's commands. Again, it might be expected that such discomfort could be relieved simply by refusing to go on, and yet this is not what happened. Milgram quotes one observer (who watched a subject through a one-way mirror):

> I observe a mature and initially poised businessman enter the laboratory smiling and confident. Within 20 minutes he was reduced to a twitching, stuttering wreck who was rapidly approaching a point of nervous collapse. . . . At one point he pushed his fist into his forehead and muttered, "Oh, God! Let's stop it." And yet he continued to respond to every word of the experimenter and obeyed to the end. (p. 377)

Milgram listed several points at the end of the article to attempt to explain why this particular situation produced such a high degree of obedience. In summary, from the point of view of the subject, his main points were that (1) if it's being sponsored by Yale, it must be in good hands, and who am I to question such a great institution; (2) the goals of the experiment appear to be important, and therefore, since I volunteered, I'll do my part to assist in the realization of those goals; (3) the learner, after all, also voluntarily came here and he has an obligation to the project too; (4) hey, it was just by chance that I'm the teacher and he's the learner—we drew lots and it could have just as easily been the other way around; (5) they're paying me for this, I'd better do my job; (6) I don't know all that much about the rights of a psychologist and his subjects, so I will yield to his discretion on this; and (7) they told us both that the shocks are painful, but not dangerous.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FINDINGS

Milgram's findings have held up quite well in the nearly 30 years since this article was published. Milgram himself repeated the procedure on similar subjects outside of the Yale setting, on unpaid college student volunteers, and on women subjects, and he found similar results each time.

In addition, he expanded further on his findings in this study by conducting a series of related experiments designed to reveal the conditions that promote or limit obedience (see Milgram, 1974). He found that the physical, and therefore emotional, distance of the victim from the teacher altered the amount of obedience. The highest level of obedience (93% going to the top of the voltage scale) occurred when the learner was in

another room and could not be seen or heard. When the learner was in the same room with the subject and the subject was required to force the learner's hand onto a shock plate, the rate of obedience dropped to 30%.

Milgram also discovered that the physical distance of the authority figure to the subject also influenced obedience. The closer the experimenter, the greater the obedience. In one condition, the experimenter was out of the room and telephoned his commands to the subject. In this case obedience fell to only 21%.

Finally, on a more positive note, when subjects were allowed to punish the learner by using any level of shock they wished, no one ever pressed any switch higher than No. 2, or 45 volts.

CRITICISMS

While Milgram's research has been extremely influential in our understanding of obedience, it has also had far-reaching effects in the area of the ethical treatment of human subjects. Even though no one ever received any shocks, how do you suppose you would feel, knowing you had been willing to shock someone (possibly to death) simply because a person in a lab coat told you to? Critics of Milgram's methods (e.g., Baumrind, 1964; Miller, 1986) claim that unacceptable levels of stress were created in the subjects during the experiment. Furthermore, it has been argued that the potential for lasting effects existed. When the deception is revealed to subjects at the end of their ordeal, they may feel used, embarrassed, and possibly distrustful of psychologists or legitimate authority figures in their future lives.

Another line of criticism focused on the validity of Milgram's findings. The basis for this criticism was that since the subjects had a trusting and rather dependent relationship with the experimenter, and the laboratory was an unfamiliar setting, obedience found there did not represent obedience in real life. Therefore, critics claim, the results of Milgram's studies were not only invalid, but because of this poor validity the treatment his subjects were exposed to could not be justified.

Milgram responded to criticisms by surveying subjects after they had participated. He found that 84% of his participants were glad to have participated, and only about 1% regretted the experience. In addition, a psychiatrist interviewed 40 of the subjects who were judged to have been the most uncomfortable in the laboratory and concluded that none had suffered any long-term effects. As to the criticism that his laboratory findings did not reflect real life, Milgram said, "A person who comes to the laboratory is an active, choosing adult, capable of accepting or rejecting the prescriptions for action addressed to him" (Milgram, 1964, p. 852).

The Milgram studies reported here have been a focal point in the ongoing debate over experimental ethics involving human subjects. It is, in fact, arguable whether this research has been more influential in the area of social psychology and obedience or in policy formation on the ethical treatment of human subjects in psychological research.

RECENT APPLICATIONS

The breadth of influence that Milgram's obedience project continues to exert on current research can best be appreciated through a brief annotated selection of recent studies that have been primarily motivated by Milgram's early methods and findings. As has been the case in every year since the early 1960s when Milgram carried out his studies, these studies are divided between attempts to refine and elaborate on people's tendency to obey authority figures, and the omnipresent debate about the ethics of using deception in research involving human subjects.

One article, by a leading authority on the work and career of Stanley Milgram, reviewed all the research stemming from Milgram's early obedience studies (Blass, 1999). In general Blass found universal support for Milgram's original findings, but, more importantly, it appears that obedience rates have not changed significantly during the nearly 40 years since Milgram first published his findings. This is contrary to many people's intuitive judgments that Americans in general have become less respectful of authority and more willing to rebel and fight back when ordered to perform behaviors with which they disagree. Another question that often arises about Milgram's early studies concerns gender and the fact that all the subjects were male. Think about it: Do you think, overall, that men or women would be more likely to obey an authority figure? Well, Blass's review of later studies by Milgram and numerous others found *no difference* in obedience rates for males versus females. For more details about the history of the influences of Milgram's work, Blass has developed an excellent Web site located at http://www.stanleymilgram.com.

An interesting view of the ongoing ethical discussion relating to the deception in Milgram's study was expressed in an article by Herrera (1997). Herrera writes that, historically, the use of deception in psychology experiments has often been framed as a *necessary* part of certain studies. However, he contends that, in reality, such deception may have been due more to a conscious choice made by researchers based on the value they placed on people versus scientific inquiry. He goes on to offer the following provocative suggestion: "Commentators frequently cite Stanley Milgram's work in the 1960s as a harbinger of changed attitudes towards deception, and suggests that today's psychologists abide by more enlightened ethical practices. *It is difficult to find evidence to support this portrayal*" (p. 23; emphasis added).

On the other hand, not everyone agrees that deception is necessarily such a sinister exercise. In an article targeting social workers, Kagel (1998) made the following provocative assertion in her article playfully titled, "Are We Lying to Ourselves about Deception?":

> Deception is usually considered a deviation from the norm and a violation of trust. However, deception is actually a common and accepted way of establishing personal boundaries and managing interpersonal relationships. . . . Deception is typically used in negotiating identity, maintaining self-esteem, protecting privacy, and redressing imbalances of power. (p. 234)

It should be noted that Kagel was referring to the uses of deception not only in interpersonal relationships in general, but in relationships between social workers and their clients as well. How do you feel about this statement? Anecdotal evidence suggests that most people are somewhat troubled by the idea that deception is so commonplace, yet at the same time they recognize there is validity in Kagel's contention.

So, what should be done to protect subjects from irresponsible deceptive practices in psychological research while at the same time allowing for some deception when absolutely necessary for scientific advancement? A study by Wendler (1996) seeks to answer this question by proposing that subjects in studies involving deception be given an increased level of "informed consent." (See the discussion of this concept in the Preface to this book.) This would mean that before you agree to be a subject in an experiment using deception, you are informed of the study's intention to use deception. "This 'second order consent' approach to acceptable deception," claims Wendler, "represents our best chance for reconciling respect for subjects with the occasional scientific need for deceptive research" (p. 87).

Finally, one study, also from Blass, actually returned us to Milgram's starting point: the Holocaust (Blass, 1993). Blass takes the perspective that Milgram's influential research may have left the impression that the situational pressures completely outweigh personality factors in determining obedience, and that this impression is not wholly accurate. Blass proposes that dispositional variables such as personality characteristics and enduring belief systems can also predict obedience. He suggests that an accurate picture of the obedience-to-authority process must consider the interaction of external *and* internal influences.

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http://www.stanleymilgram.com (2000)