

# Social Influence: Obedience & Compliance

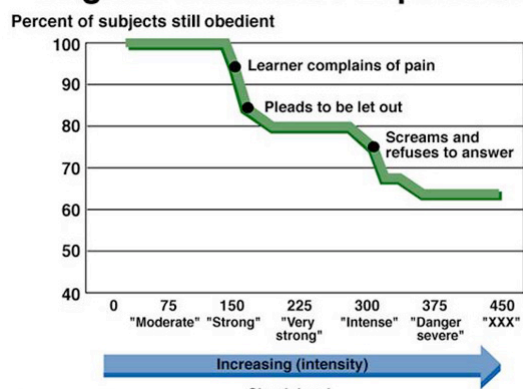
Psy 240; Fall 2006  
Purdue University  
Dr. Kipling Williams

## Classic Studies

- Milgram's obedience experiments

David G. Myers, *Social Psychology*, 6ed. Copyright © 1999. The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

### Milgram Obedience Experiment



(From Milgram, 1965)

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## What Breeds Obedience?

- Escalating Commitment
- Emotional distance of the victim
- Closeness and legitimacy of the authority
- Institutional authority
- The liberating effects of group influence



© Stanley Milgram, 1965.  
From the film *Obedience*, distributed by the Pennsylvania State University

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## Reflections on the Classic Studies

- Behavior and attitudes
- The power of the situation
- The fundamental attribution error

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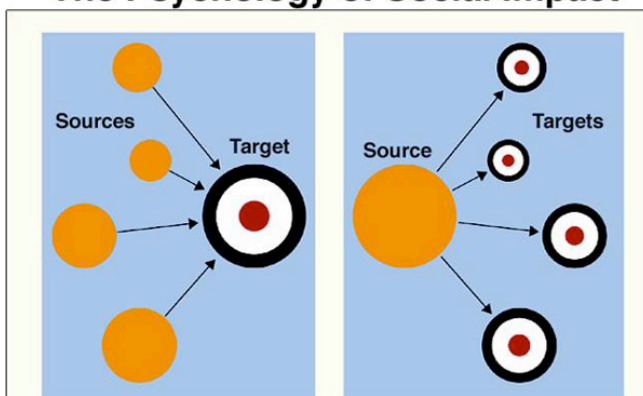
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# Social Impact Theory

Latané, 1980

Stephen L. Franzoi, Social Psychology, Copyright © 1996. The McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

## The Psychology of Social Impact



Multiplication

Division

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## *Social Influence*



Have I got a deal for you...

## Defining Social Influence

- People affecting other people.
- Conformity: Do what others are doing (without the others trying to get you to do it!)
- Social inhibition: Stopping doing something you'd normally do because others are present.
- Compliance: Getting you to do something you wouldn't have done otherwise
- Obedience: Ordering others to behave in ways they might not ordinarily do
- Excellent book and reference:
  - Cialdini, R. (1996). *Influence (4th edition)*. HarperCollins College Publishers.

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## Weapons of influence

### *Useful metaphors...*

- Click, Whirr...
  - these weapons work best on us when we are on “auto-pilot” - not processing the message carefully.
- Jujitsu
  - Compliance professionals get you to do their work for them...they provide the leverage, you do the work

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## Six weapons of influence

- Reciprocity
- Commitment and consistency
- Social proof
- Liking
- Authority
- Scarcity

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## Weapon #1: Reciprocity

- The not-so-free sample
- Reciprocal concessions (“door-in-the-face”)



Free hot dogs and balloons for the little ones!

*large request first (to which everyone would say “no”) followed by the target request.*

- Unequal reciprocity (25¢ for \$2.00)

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## Weapon #2: Commitment and Consistency



Just start filling out the paper work, and I'll go get the "green light" from the boss...[later] Oh...I'm sorry...

- Low-balling (growing legs on which decision stands)
- Telemarketers learn not to breathe
- "Foot-in-the-door"

*small request (to which everyone would say "yes") followed by the target request*

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## Weapon #3: Social Proof



This is the most popular car in Indiana. Everyone's buying one

- Conformity
- Laugh-tracks, claqueurs
- Bystander "apathy"
  - Kitty Genovese attack, 1964
    - But also social inhibition
- Jonestown
  - Mass suicide, 1978

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## Weapon #4: Liking



You're my kind of people;  
I like you!

- We like (and comply) with people who (say they) like us...and to those who are similar to us...and to those who are attractive...
- We feel obligated to those we like because we don't want them to start disliking us (we dislike relational devaluation).
- Flattery gets you everywhere.

## Weapon #5: Authority



I've been selling for 40 years,  
so I know what I'm talking about...  
You'll never get a better deal

- Blind obedience to authority
  - Milgram, 1960-1963
- Status signifies expertise
- Clothes make the deal

## Weapon #6: Scarcity



"This is the last one on the lot"  
"Sale ends tomorrow"

- Commodity theory: An economic principle applied to psychological valuation--what is scarce is more valuable
- Also, scarceness implies social proof

## How to stop yourself from automatic social influence

- THINK!
- Understand how and why the tactic is working.
- Ask yourself: Do I really want to do this or am I doing it to please someone else?
- Wait for a couple hours. If the desire goes away, you probably don't need it.
- Point out the compliance tactic to the compliance professional