

10

Norms and behavior

What's it about?

(Social Psychology pp. 351–395)

Norms are effective guides for social behavior. Norms must be activated before they can guide behavior. When individuals are in a state of **deindividuation**, they see themselves only in terms of group identity, and their behavior is likely to be guided by group norms alone.

The **norm of social reciprocity** directs us to return to others the favors, goods, and services they offer us. This norm is used in the **door-in-the-face technique**. The **norm of social commitment** directs us to keep our promises. This norm is used in the **low-ball technique**. The **norm of obedience** directs us toward submission to authority. Milgram showed this obedience in his study where participants had to deliver shocks to suffering victims.

It is possible to resist being manipulated by norms. People display **reactance** by fighting against threats to their freedom of action when they find norms inappropriate. Attitudes and norms typically work together to influence behavior (directly or indirectly).

According to the **theory of planned behavior**, intentions are a function of three factors: attitudes about the behavior, social norms relevant to the behavior, and perceptions of control over the behavior. When attitudes and norms disagree, their influence on behavior will depend on their relative accessibility.

Chapter topics

- Norms: Effective guides for social behavior (*SP pp. 353–364*)
- The norm of reciprocity: Treating others as they treat you (*SP pp. 364–368*)
- The norm of commitment: Keeping your promises (*SP pp. 368–370*)
- The norm of obedience: Submitting to authority (*SP pp. 370–380*)
- Rebellion and resistance: Fighting back (*SP pp. 381–387*)
- Putting it all together: Multiple guides for behavior (*SP pp. 387–392*)

NORMS: EFFECTIVE GUIDES FOR SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Ask yourself

- What do social norms reflect?
- How do norms become activated?
- How do norms guide behavior?

What you need to know

ACTIVATING NORMS TO GUIDE BEHAVIOR (<i>SP pp. 353–359</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Direct reminders of norms• Environments activate norms• Groups activate norms• Deindividuation
WHICH NORMS GUIDE BEHAVIOR? (<i>SP pp. 359–361</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Descriptive norms as guides for behavior• Injunctive norms as guides for behavior• The interplay of descriptive and injunctive norms
WHY NORMS GUIDE BEHAVIOR SO EFFECTIVELY (<i>SP pp. 362–363</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enforcement: Do it, or else• Internalization: It's right and proper, so I do it

ACTIVATING NORMS TO GUIDE BEHAVIOR

(*SP pp. 343–359*)

Direct reminders of norms

Norms must be activated before they can guide behavior.

Norms can be activated by deliberate reminders, in fact such reminders are all around us. Signs direct us where to go and how to behave, and other people also provide information on proper behavior.

Weblink: Norms and the Rules of the Road

<http://nortonbooks.typepad.com/everydaysociology/2010/10/driving-social-norms-and-social-structure.html>

Environments can activate norms

The study by Cialdini and others (1990) [DOI:10.1037/0022-3514.36.5.463] showed that people are more likely to drop litter in messy environments than in surroundings that are clean and free of trash (SP p. 354).

CASE STUDY: The broken windows theory [see ch10-CS-01.doc]

Groups activate norms

We very quickly learn normative behavior from observing others. Research on towel usage in hotels by Goldstein, Cialdini and Griskevicius (2008) [DOI: 10.1177/0146167208316691] shows that informing guests that the previous occupants of the room had reused their towels, increased the number of guests who did the same.

Deindividuation (SP pp. 356–359)

Deindividuation refers to losing oneself in the crowd; the state in which group or social identity dominates personal or individual identity.

Deindividuation is often used as an explanation for the results of the Stanford Prison Experiment. Young men were randomly assigned to play the role of prison guard or prisoner and their behavior conformed to the norms of their roles in surprising ways.

Weblink: The Stanford Prison Experiment website

www.prisonexp.org/

Weblink: The Stanford Prison Experiment – Where are they now

http://alumni.stanford.edu/get/page/magazine/article/?article_id=40741

The result of deindividuation can be either antisocial or prosocial behavior, depending on what norms are activated by the group.

Weblink: Some real world examples of deindividuation

<http://youarenotsmart.com/2011/02/10/deindividuation/>

CASE STUDY: Deindividuation and cheating in online games [see ch10-CS-02.doc]

WHICH NORMS GUIDE BEHAVIOR?

(SP pp. 359–362)

Descriptive norms as guides for behavior

Seeing what other people do has an influence on our own behavior.

Learning how others behave also has implications for health behavior, although health messages that provide information about normative behavior should avoid highlighting low rates of health-related behavior.

Injunctive norms as guides for behavior

Our behavior is also influenced by what people believe *should* be done.

The interplay of descriptive and injunctive norms

Behavior is most likely to be influenced when both descriptive and injunctive norms are in line.

WHY NORMS GUIDE BEHAVIOR SO EFFECTIVELY

(SP pp. 362–364)

Enforcement: Do it, or else

Norms are sometimes enforced by rewards and punishments (carrot-and-stick approach).

Using rewards and punishments is the least effective way to establish and maintain norm-consistent behavior by groups.

This is because it is not likely to bring about private acceptance of norms (only public compliance). Also, no society can afford enough monitors to enforce all norms on all its citizens all of the time.

Weblink: What happens when someone violates a norm?

www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=W27pfiRg5WQ

RESEARCH ACTIVITY: Free hugs: Violating a social norm [see ch10-RA-01.doc]

Internalization: It's right and proper, so I do it

People follow norms because they seem right.

Acting in line with group norms is a way of maintaining a shared reality and expressing group identity, and it also makes people feel respected by others whose opinions they value.

So what does this mean?

Group norms have a powerful effect on behavior. But norms can only guide behavior when those norms are activated by obvious reminders, or by subtle cues. When social identity dominates individual identity (**deindividuation**), the power of group norms on behavior increases. This can lead to antisocial or prosocial behavior, depending on the group norms.

People's behavior is influenced by observations of how others behave (**descriptive norms**) and by knowledge of how people feel they *should* behave (**injunctive norms**). These norms are most likely to impact the behavior of others when the way people feel they *should* behave is in line with how they actually *do* behave.

People adhere to social norms through enforcement and internalization.

NORMS FOR MASTERY AND CONNECTEDNESS: RECIPROCITY AND COMMITMENT

Ask yourself

- What concession techniques exist?
- Why could concession techniques be harmful?
- What does the norm of social reciprocity mean?
- Why do people stick by their commitments even when the deal has changed?
- What does the low-ball technique stand for?

What you need to know

THE NORM OF RECIPROCITY (<i>SP pp. 364–367</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Returning favors• Reciprocating concessions: The door-in-the-face technique
THE NORM OF COMMITMENT (<i>SP pp. 368–370</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The low-ball technique• Norm consistent behavior across cultures

THE NORM OF RECIPROCITY

(*SP pp. 364–367*)

Returning Favors

One of the most prevalent social norms directs us to return to others favors, goods, and services that they offer to us. This is the **norm of social reciprocity**.

This norm can sometimes be activated to our disadvantage.

Weblink: More information about reciprocity

http://changingminds.org/explanations/theories/reciprocity_norm.htm

Reciprocating Concessions: The door-in-the-face technique

The **door-in-the-face technique** consists of making a large request and following its refusal with a concession that invokes the norm of reciprocity.

Three conditions must exist to activate the norm of reciprocity when using the door-in-the-face technique. First, the initial request must be large enough that it is sure to be refused, but not so large that it will breed suspicion. Second, the target must be given the chance to compromise by refusing the initial request and complying with the second request. Third, the second request must be related to the first request, and come from the same person.

Weblink: The door-in-the-face-effect

<http://changingminds.org/techniques/general/sequential/ditf.htm>

RESEARCH ACTIVITY: Turning the tables: Using the norm of reciprocity with customer service professionals [see ch10-RA-02.doc]

THE NORM OF COMMITMENT

(SP pp. 368–370)

The **norm of social commitment** requires us to stand by agreements and fulfill our obligations.

People stick by their commitments for several reasons.

They feel an obligation to fulfill their social commitments.

Such commitments help us to maintain a positive view of ourselves.

Weblink: How to use Cialdini's six principles of persuasion

<http://conversionxl.com/how-to-use-cialdinis-6-principles-of-persuasion-to-boost-conversions/#>.

The low-ball technique

The **low-ball technique** is used when an influencer secures an agreement with a request, but then increases the size of that request by revealing hidden costs.

CASE STUDY: The low-ball technique [see ch10-CS-03.doc]

Weblink: The low-ball technique

<http://changingminds.org/techniques/general/sequential/low-ball.htm>

Weblink: An example of the low-ball technique in car sales

<http://money.cnn.com/2004/01/14/pf/autos/yoyo/index.htm?cnn=yes>

RESEARCH ACTIVITY: The low-ball technique [see ch10-RA-03.doc]

Norm consistent behavior across cultures

Individuals from collectivist cultures are more sensitive to the norm of reciprocity and the norm of social commitment may be stronger in these cultures.

Because they feel greater pressure to reciprocate favors, individuals from collectivist cultures may go out of their way to avoid receiving favors in the first place.

So what does this mean?

The **norm of social reciprocity** is the most prevalent social norm, and it directs us to return favors to others. Salespeople, sometimes to our disadvantage, often use this norm. Concessions are supposed to be reciprocated as well. This norm is used in the **door-in-the-face technique**. This technique consists of making a large request and following its refusal with a concession that invokes returning a concession. The **norm of social commitment** requires us to keep our promises. This norm is used in the **low-ball technique**, which relies on the fact that people usually stick to the deal even though it has

changed for the worse. The reason people stick to their commitment is that they want to fulfill social commitments and maintain a positive self-image.

THE NORM OF OBEDIENCE: SUBMITTING TO AUTHORITY

Ask yourself

- What was Milgram's explanation for the shocking results of his studies?
- How does obedience escalate?

What you need to know

MILGRAM'S STUDIES OF OBEDIENCE (<i>SP pp. 371–372</i>)
ATTEMPTING TO EXPLAIN OBEDIENCE (<i>SP pp. 372–375</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obedience in organizations
THE NORM OF OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY (<i>SP pp. 375–379</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Authority must be legitimate• Authority must accept responsibility• The norm of obedience must be activated• Social identification and obedience• Maintaining and escalating obedience
NORMATIVE TRADE-OFFS: THE PLUSES AND MINUSES OF OBEDIENCE (<i>SP pp. 380–381</i>)

MILGRAM'S STUDIES OF OBEDIENCE

(*SP pp. 371–372*)

In one of the best-known experiments in psychology, people obeyed orders to deliver shocks to an unwilling and clearly suffering victim. They obeyed these orders even though they were not forced to do so (Milgram, 1963 [DOI:10.1037/h0040525]) (*SP pp. 371–372*).

Weblink: The making of Milgram's obedience studies

www.thepsychologist.org.uk/archive/archive_home.cfm?volumeID=23&editionID=192&ArticleID=1729

ATTEMPTING TO EXPLAIN OBEDIENCE

(*SP pp. 372–375*)

The destructive obedience of Milgram’s participants was not due to personality defects, hard-hearted unconcern about the victim, or suspicion that the experiment was rigged.

Recent studies show the same results (Askenasy, 1978; Blass, 2000) (*SP pp. 372–375*).

Weblink: More on Milgram’s obedience studies

www.thepsychfiles.com/2009/06/episode-97-stanley-milgram-obedience-study-finally-replicated/

Obedience in organizations

Many recent studies indicate that “organizational obedience” (obedience that occurs in hierarchical bureaucratic organizations) may occur at even higher levels than suggested by Milgram’s studies.

Weblink: More information about different obedience studies

<http://submoon.freeshell.org/pix/valium/aadc/img5.png>

Weblink: Replicating Milgram

<http://abcnews.go.com/Primetime/story?id=2765416&page=1>

CASE STUDY: Abu Ghraib [see ch10-CS-04.doc]

THE NORM OF OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY

(*SP pp. 375–379*)

The **norm of obedience to authority** is the shared view that people should obey commands given by a person with legitimate authority.

Weblink: When obedience to authority goes wrong

www.heal-online.org/prank121807.pdf

Authority must be legitimate

To achieve obedience, an authority must convey that he or she is the person who should be obeyed (e.g., by wearing a uniform).

Authority must accept responsibility

When all responsibility is ceded to the authority, people enter the agentic state: They see themselves as merely the agent of the authority figure.

Individuals differ in the extent to which they abdicate responsibility when faced with orders from an authority figure.

The norm of obedience must be activated

The more obvious the authority figure in Milgram's experiments, the more likely the norm is to be activated and the more likely people are to obey.

If alternative norms are more accessible, obedience drops.

Physically distancing oneself and blaming the victim are ways to suppress other norms that are incompatible with obedience.

CASE STUDY: Tortured victims appear more guilty [see ch10-CS-05.doc]

Social identification and obedience

As the perceived identification with the experimenter increases, rates of obedience also increase.

Maintaining and escalating obedience

Dissonance processes help to maintain obedience once it occurs.

The gradual escalation of obedience reinforces the legitimacy of the authority.

Weblink: The obedience experiments at 50

www.psychologicalscience.org/index.php/publications/observer/2011/october-11/online-exclusive-the-obedience-experiments-at-50.html

NORMATIVE TRADE-OFFS: THE PLUSES AND MINUSES OF OBEDIENCE

(SP pp. 380–381)

The obligation to obey authority figures can be used for good or evil purposes.

Weblink: More information about moral disengagement

http://faculty.babson.edu/krollag/org_site/soc_psych/bandura_moral.html

So what does this mean?

In Milgram's studies, people obeyed instructions to deliver shocks to a suffering victim even though they were not forced to do so. The same results are found in recent studies (e.g., obedience in organizations). Activating the obedience norm, decreasing attention to other norms, a legitimate authority, and an authority that accepts responsibility, all increase obedience. Dissonance processes help to maintain and escalate obedience.

RESISTING, REJECTING, AND REBELLING AGAINST NORMS

Ask yourself

- How can people resist the norm of obedience to authority?
- What is the most crucial factor in creating rebellion?
- What questions can help to think things through (systematic processing)?

What you should know

REACTANCE (<i>SP pp. 382–383</i>)
RESISTING AND REJECTING USING SYSTEMATIC PROCESSING (<i>SP pp. 383–385</i>)
USING NORMS AGAINST NORMS (<i>SP pp. 385–387</i>)

REACTANCE

(*SP pp. 382–383*)

People can resist being manipulated by norms. Attempts to limit choice can be met with **reactance**.

People fight against threats to freedom of action when norms are not privately accepted, or are seen as inappropriate.

Weblink: More information about reactance

<http://changingminds.org/explanations/theories/reactance.htm>

RESISTING AND REJECTING USING SYSTEMATIC PROCESSING

(*SP pp. 383–385*)

One defense against normative pressure on behavior is to think things through, to make sure that any norm made accessible in the situation is actually applicable.

Ways to help this include questioning how norms are being used, questioning claims about relationships, and questioning others' views of the situation.

Weblink: The personal account of a disobedient participant

www.jewishcurrents.org/2004-jan-dimow.htm

USING NORMS AGAINST NORMS

(SP pp. 385–387)

The most effective defense is to use norms against norms.

Group consensus and social support are crucial to a successful rebellion.

So what does this mean?

When norms are not privately accepted, people can resist being manipulated by these norms. **Reactance** explains people's anger when they feel threatened in their behavioral freedom. One defense against this manipulation by norms is to think things through. Systematic thinking during a "cooling off" period and taking alternatives into consideration are important. The most effective defense is to use norms against norms. The presence of others (forming an ally) is crucial to successful rebellion.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: MULTIPLE GUIDES FOR BEHAVIOR

Ask yourself

- How can norms and attitudes influence behavior?
- What does the theory of planned behavior mean?
- When do attitudes have more influence on behavior than norms?

What you need to know

BOTH ATTITUDES AND NORMS INFLUENCE BEHAVIOR (<i>SP pp. 388–391</i>)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The direct route• The indirect route
WHEN ATTITUDES AND NORMS CONFLICT: ACCESSIBILITY DETERMINES BEHAVIOR (<i>SP pp. 391–392</i>)

BOTH ATTITUDES AND NORMS INFLUENCE BEHAVIOR

(*SP pp. 388–391*)

The direct route

Attitudes and norms can color our perceptions and influence our behavior in an immediate and automatic way.

The indirect route

The central idea of the theory of reasoned action is that attitudes and social norms are carefully considered and combined to form intentions to act in a particular way.

According to the **theory of planned behavior** (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977

[\[DOI:10.1037/0033-2909.84.5.888\]](https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.84.5.888), 1980) intentions are a function of three factors: attitudes about the behavior, social norms relevant to the behavior, and perceptions of control over the behavior.

Weblink: More information about the theory of planned behavior
www.psych-it.com.au/Psychlopedia/article.asp?id=69

WHEN ATTITUDES AND NORMS CONFLICT: ACCESSIBILITY DETERMINES BEHAVIOR

(SP pp. 391–392)

Whether attitudes or norms have more influence on behavior depends on their relative accessibility for a particular behavior, in a particular situation, and for a particular person.

Weblink: How the group changes what we think
<http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052748704436004576298962165925364>

So what does this mean?

Both attitudes and norms influence behavior, but only when they are accessible. Attitudes and norms can trigger behavior directly or indirectly. According to the **theory of planned behavior**, intentions are a function of three factors: attitudes about the behavior, social norms relevant to the behavior, and perceptions of control over the behavior.

When attitudes and norms disagree, their impact on behavior, whether direct or indirect, depends on their relative accessibility. Individuals can differ in the extent to which they are responsive to social norms versus private attitudes.