

Compliance

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Introduction

- Have you ever done something you didn't really want to do simply because someone else asked you to?
 - Buying something after being persuaded by a pushy salesperson or trying a particular brand of soda after seeing a commercial endorsement featuring your favorite celebrity are two examples of what is known as compliance.
- What influence does it have on our social behavior?
- Are there any factors that impact compliance?
- In order to learn the answers to these questions, it is important to understand exactly what compliance is and how it works.

What Is Compliance?

- In psychology, compliance refers to changing one's behavior due to the request or direction of another person.
 - It is going along with the group or changing a behavior to fit in with the group, while still disagreeing with the group.
 - Unlike obedience, in which the other individual is in a position of authority, compliance does not rely upon being in a position of power or authority over others.
- **"Compliance refers to a change in behavior that is *requested* by another person or group; the individual acted in some way because others asked him or her to do so (but it was possible to refuse or decline.)"**
(Breckler, Olson, & Wiggins, 2006)
- **"Situations calling for compliance take many forms. These include a friend's plea for help, sheepishly prefaced by the question "Can you do me a favor?" They also include the pop-up ads on the Internet designed to lure you into a commercial site and the salesperson's pitch for business prefaced by the dangerous words "Have I got a deal for you!" Sometimes the request is up front and direct; what you see is what you get. At other times, it is part of a subtle and more elaborate**

Techniques Used to Gain Compliance

Compliance

- Compliance is a major topic of interest within the field of consumer psychology. This specialty area focuses on the psychology of consumer behavior, including how sellers can influence buyers and persuade them to purchase goods and services. Marketers often rely on a number of different strategies to obtain compliance from consumers. Some of these techniques include:
- **The "Door-in-the-Face" Technique**
In this approach, marketers start by asking for a large commitment. When the other person refuses, they then make a smaller and more reasonable request. For example, imagine that a business owner asks you to make a large investment in a new business opportunity. After you decline the request, the business owner asks if you could at least make a small product purchase to help him out. After refusing the first offer, you might feel compelled to comply with his second appeal.
- **The "Foot-in-the-Door" Technique**
In this approach, marketers start by asking for and obtaining a small commitment. Once you have already complied with the first request, you are more likely to also comply with a second, larger request. For example, your co-worker asks if you fill in for him for a day. After you say yes, he then asks

Techniques Used to Gain Compliance...

- **The "That's-Not-All" Technique**

Have you ever found yourself watching a television infomercial? Once a product has been pitched, the seller then adds an additional offer before the potential purchaser has made a decision. "That's not all," the salesperson might suggest, "If you buy a set of widgets now, we'll throw in an extra widget for free!" The goal is to make the offer as appealing as possible.

- **The "Lowball" Technique**

This strategy involves getting a person to make a commitment and then raising the terms or stakes of that commitment. For example, a salesperson might get you to agree to buy a particular cell phone plan at a low price before adding on a number of hidden fees that then make the plan much more costly.

- **Ingratiation**

This approach involves gaining approval from the target in order to gain their compliance. Strategies such as flattering the target or presenting oneself in a way that appeals to the individual are often used in this approach.

Techniques Used to Gain Compliance...

- **Reciprocity**

People are more likely to comply if they feel that the other person has already done something for them. We have been socialized to believe that if people extend a kindness to us, then we should return the favor. Researchers have found that the reciprocity effect is so strong that it can work even when the initial favor is uninvited or comes from someone we do not like.

What Does the Research Say About Compliance?

- There are a number of well-known studies that have explored issues related to compliance, conformity, and obedience. Some of these include:
- **The Asch Conformity Experiments**
Psychologist Solomon Asch conducted a series of experiments to demonstrate how people conform in groups. When shown three lines of different lengths, participants were asked to select the longest line. When the others in the group (who were confederates in the experiment) selected the wrong line, participants would conform to group pressure and also select the wrong line length.
- **The Milgram Obedience Experiment**
Stanley Milgram's famous and controversial obedience experiments revealed the power of authority could be used to get people to conform. In these experiments, participants were directed by the experimenter to deliver electrical shocks to another person. Even though the shocks were not real, the participants genuinely believed that they were shocking the other person. Milgram found that 65 percent of people would deliver the maximum, possibly fatal electrical shocks on the orders of an authority figure.

What Does the Research Say About Compliance?...

- The Stanford Prison Experiment

During the 1970s, psychologist Philip Zimbardo conducted an experiment in which participants played the roles of guards and prisoners in a mock-prison set up in the basement of the psychology department at Stanford University. Originally slated to last two weeks, the experiment had to be terminated after just six days after the guards began displaying abusive behavior and the prisoners became anxious and highly stressed. The experiment demonstrated how people will comply with the expectations that come from certain social roles.

Factors That Influence Compliance

- People are more likely to comply when they believe that they share something in common with the person making the request.
- When group affiliation is important to people, they are more likely to comply with social pressure.
 - For example, if a college student places a great deal of importance on belonging to a college fraternity, they are more likely to go along with the group's requests even if it goes against their own beliefs or wishes.
- The likelihood of compliance increases with the number of people present.
 - If only one or two people are present, a person might buck the group opinion and refuse to comply.
- Being in the immediate presence of a group makes compliance more likely.