Chapter 7

Social Influence

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Blandishing persuasion steals the mind even of the wise.

—Homer

For nearly a century, social psychologists have been investigating the process of social influence, wherein one person's attitudes, cognitions, or behaviors are changed through the deeds of another. Because other authors within this volume have addressed social influences on attitudes and cognitions (see Chapter 6), our focus will be on the realm of behavior change and on the factors that cause one individual to comply with another's request for action of some sort. In the process, we will consider a set of seven psychological principles that appear to influence behavioral compliance decisions most powerfully. Briefly, these principles involve pressures to comply because of human tendencies to (a) return a gift, favor, or service; (b) be consistent with prior commitments; (c) follow the lead of multiple similar others; (d) accommodate the requests of those we like; (e) conform to the directives of legitimate authority; (f) seize opportunities that are scarce or dwindling in availability; and (g) assist those with whom we share a group identity.

A proper understanding of social influence is of vast consequence, as the process appears to be an elemental feature of human functioning. It is inescapable that those individuals able to influence, artfully and usefully, the responding of those around them gain an enormous competitive advantage from it. As a result, their capacity for survival will almost certainly be enhanced and social influence-related traits, abilities, and processes are likely to have evolved to be fundamental to human nature. Indeed, two of the most universal features of human interaction, language and facial expression, have recently been reinterpreted in terms of social influence motives. As regards the first of these universals, consider the conclusion from a research program (led by the psycholinguist Gün Semin) designed to resolve the question, "What is language principally for?" The emergent answer seems groundbreaking: No longer should we think of language as primarily a mechanism of conveyance, as a means for delivering to recipients a communicator's conception of reality. Instead, we should think of language as primarily a mechanism of influence, as a means for *inducing* recipients to share that conception of reality and to act in accord with it (Cavicchio, Melcher, & Poesio, 2014; Semin, 2012; Semin & Fiedler, 1988). A similar paradigm shift is occurring in the domain of facial displays, where the long-standing "basic theory of emotions"—that conceptualizes facial expressions as primarily operating to mirror and reveal one or another of a set of primitive human emotions (Ekman, 1972, 2017)—is being upset by a view of those expressions as functioning principally to influence others to act (Crivelli & Fridlund, 2018). According to this conception, facial displays should no longer be interpreted as "the royal road to emotions" but, instead, as a common road to influence. In both cases, the basic human operations of language and facial expression are being redefined in terms of what appears to be the even more basic operation of producing advantageous change in others.

Social Influences on Compliance

Focusing on Powerful Effects

Within academic social psychology, research into the behavioral compliance process has emphasized two questions: "Which principles and techniques reliably affect compliance?" and "How do these principles and techniques work to affect compliance as they do?" The first of these questions is concerned with the identification of real effects, whereas the second is concerned with their theoretical/conceptual bases. Almost without exception, the vehicle that has been used to answer these two questions has been the controlled experiment. And this is understandable, as controlled experimentation provides an excellent context for addressing issues such as whether an effect is real (i.e., reliable) and which theoretical account best explains its occurrence.

Regrettably, when the question of primary interest includes a determination of the *power* of possible influences on ordinary compliance behavior, the controlled experiment becomes less suited to the job. The high levels of experimental rigor and precision that allow us to determine that an effect is genuine and theoretically interpretable simultaneously decrease our ability to assess the potency of that effect. That is, because the best-designed experiments (a) eliminate or control all sources of influence except the one under study and (b) possess highly sensitive measurements techniques that may register whisper-like effects so small as to never make a difference when other (extraneous) factors are allowed to vary naturally, as they typically do in the social environment.

Thus, rigorous experimentation should not be used as the primary device for deciding which compliance-related influences are powerful enough to be submitted to rigorous experimentation for further study. Some other *starting point* should be found to identify the most potent influences on the compliance process. Otherwise, valuable time could well be spent seeking to investigate and to apply effects that are only epiphenomena of the controlled experimental setting.

The Development of Powerful Compliance Inducers

A crucial question thus becomes, "How are the most *powerful* compliance principles and tactics determined?" One answer involves the systematic observation of the behaviors of commercial compliance professionals.

Who are the commercial compliance professionals, and why should their actions be especially informative as to the identification of powerful influences on everyday compliance decisions? They can be defined as those individuals whose business or financial well-being is dependent on their ability to induce compliance (e.g., salespeople, fundraisers, advertisers, lobbyists, cult recruiters, negotiators, con

artists, etc.). With this definition in place, it becomes possible to recognize why the regular and widespread practices of these professionals would be noteworthy indicators of the powerful influences on the compliance process: Because the livelihoods of commercial compliance professionals depend on the effectiveness of their procedures, those professionals who use procedures that work well to elicit compliance responses will survive and flourish. In addition, they will pass these successful procedures on to the succeeding generations (trainees). However, those practitioners who use unsuccessful compliance procedures will either drop them or quickly go out of business; in either case, the procedures themselves will not be passed on to newer generations.

Accordingly, these procedures will point a careful observer toward the major principles that people use to decide when to comply. Several years ago, one of the authors of this chapter resolved to become such an observer. What emerged from this period of systematic observation was a list of six principles on which compliance professionals appeared to base most of their psychological attempts: (a) reciprocity, (b) consistency, (c) social proof, (d) liking, (e) authority, and (f) scarcity. A full account of the origins, workings, and prevalence of these six principles is available elsewhere (Cialdini, 2008; see also Goldstein, Martin, & Cialdini, 2008). More recently, a seventh principle, unity, has been added to the list (Cialdini, 2016). The remainder of this chapter offers a summary description of these principles and of the social scientific theory and evidence regarding when, how, and why each principle functions to motivate compliance.

The Principles of Influence

Goal-Directed Nature of Behavior

Before discussing each principle in detail, it is useful to consider why these principles are so powerful at influencing human behavior. An important thread that links all of the principles is related to the goal-directed character of human behavior. Our actions are aimed at achieving goals on several levels (Kenrick, Griskevicius, Neuberg, & Schaller, 2010; also see Chapter 16). At a surface level, for instance, people behave so as to attain a variety of moment-to-moment or day-to-day goals: A person might want to make a good impression on a teacher or save enough money to buy a car. At a deeper level, behavior promotes ultimate or evolutionary motives, including survival and reproduction. Indeed, part of the reason why the principles discussed in this chapter are effective at influencing behavior is because they promote adaptive behavior. That is, the sense of obligation to reciprocate a gift, the tendency to value scarce items, the inclination to turn to similar others or to experts in times of uncertainty, and the desire to say "yes" to people we like all have likely evolutionary bases (Sundie, Cialdini, Griskevicius, & Kenrick, 2006).

Let's consider how the seven principles of influence help achieve at least three human goals: affiliation, accuracy, and consistency (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). Humans are fundamentally motivated to affiliate, creating and maintaining meaningful social relationships with others (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Reciprocating favors and saying "yes" to those we like and those with whom we share a group identity are adaptive strategies for affiliation. Humans are similarly motivated to make accurate decisions that will help further their other goals in the most effective manner. When the best course of action is unclear, it is adaptive to follow the advice of authority or the behavior of similar others. People also have a strong need to behave in a manner that is consistent with their actions, statements, commitments, and beliefs.

Reciprocity

Pay every debt as if God wrote the bill.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

One of the most powerful norms in all human cultures is that for reciprocity (Cialdini, 2008), which obligates individuals to return the form of behavior they have received from another. As a result, people say "yes" to those they owe. Not always, of course—nothing in human social interaction works like that—but often enough that behavioral scientists have labeled this tendency the *rule for reciprocation*. Not only does the rule apply to all cultures, but it also applies broadly to various behaviors within those cultures (Gintis et al., 2003; Gouldner, 1960). Indeed, children respond to the rule before they are two years old (Dunfield & Kuhlmeier, 2010). By the time they are adults, its power influences all aspects of their lives, including their buying patterns. For example, visitors to a candy store became 42% more likely to make a purchase if they'd received a gift piece of chocolate upon entry (Lammers, 1991). Much more worrisome is the impact of the rule on the voting actions of legislators. In the United States, companies that make sizable campaign contributions to lawmakers who sit on tax policymaking committees experience significant reductions in their tax rates (Brown, Drake, & Wellman, 2015). The legislators will deny any quid pro quo, but, manifestly, the companies know better. Although the rule tends to operate most reliably in public domains, it is so deeply ingrained in most individuals that it also directs behavior in private settings (Burger, Sanchez, Imberi, & Grande, 2009; Whatley et al., 1999) and virtual environments (Eastwick & Gardner, 2009).

A *reciprocation rule* for compliance can be worded as follows: *One should be more willing to comply with a request from someone who has previously provided a favor or concession.* Under this general rule, people will feel obligated to provide gifts, favors, services, and aid to those who have given them such things first (Goldstein, Griskevicius, & Cialdini, 2011; Singer, Van Holwyk, & Maher, 2000), sometimes even returning larger favors than those they have received. For example, restaurant servers who gave two candies to guests along with the check increased their tips by 14.1% (Strohmetz et al., 2002). A number of sales and fundraising tactics also use this factor to advantage: The compliance professional initially gives something to the target person, thereby causing the target to be more likely to give something in return. Often, this "something in return" is the target's compliance with a substantial request.

The unsolicited gift, accompanied by a request for a donation, is a commonly used technique that employs the norm for reciprocity. One example is organizations sending free gifts through the mail. Such groups count on the fact that most people will not go to the trouble of returning the gift and will feel uncomfortable about keeping it without reciprocating in some way. For instance, the Disabled American Veterans organization reports that its simple mail appeal for donations produces a response rate of about 18%. But when the mailings also includes an unsolicited gift (gummed, individualized address labels), the success rate nearly doubles to 35% (Smolowe, 1990).

A crucial aspect of successful reciprocity-based influence techniques involves activating the sense of obligation. The creation of obligation necessitates that the individual who desires to influence another needs to be the first to provide a gift. It is noteworthy that this important aspect of reciprocity-based influence techniques is often misemployed. For example, numerous commercial organizations offer donations to charity in return for the purchase of products or services—a general strategy falling under the rubric of "cause-related marketing." Yet such tit-for-tat appeals often fail to engage reciprocity properly because influence agents do not provide benefits first and then allow recipients to return the favor. The suboptimal nature of such messages can be clearly seen in a field experiment in hotels, in which our research team varied messages that urged guests to reuse their towels. Messages that promised a donation in guests' name to an environmental cause if guests first reused their towels were no more effective than standard pro-environmental messages (Goldstein et al., 2011). Consistent with the obligating force of reciprocity,

however, a message informing guests that the hotel had already made a donation in the guests' name increased towel reuse by 26%.

Reciprocal Concessions

A variation of the norm for reciprocation of favors is that for reciprocation of concessions. A reciprocal concessions procedure (or *door-in-the-face technique*) for inducing compliance has been documented repeatedly (e.g., Cialdini, Vincent, Lewis, Catalan, Wheeler, & Darby, 1975; for meta-analyses, see O'Keefe & Hale, 1998, 2001). A requester uses this procedure by beginning with an extreme request that is usually rejected and then retreating to a more moderate favor—the one the requester had in mind from the outset. In doing so, the requester hopes that the retreat from an extreme to a moderate request will spur the target person to make a reciprocal concession by moving from initial rejection of the larger favor to acceptance of the smaller one. This reciprocal concessions strategy has been successfully used in fundraising contexts where, after refusing a larger request for donations, people become substantially more likely than before to give a moderately sized contribution (e.g., Reingen, 1978). Cialdini and Ascani (1976) also used this technique in soliciting blood donors. They first requested a person's involvement in a long-term donor program. When that request was refused, the solicitor made a smaller request for a one-time donation. This pattern of a large request (that is refused) followed by a smaller request significantly increased compliance with the smaller request, as compared to a control condition of people who were asked only to perform the smaller one-time favor (a 50% vs. a 32% compliance rate).

Of special interest to university students is evidence that the door-in-the-face technique can greatly increase a professor's willingness to spend time helping a student (Harari, Mohr, & Hosey, 1980). In that study, only 59% of faculty members were willing to spend 15 to 20 minutes to meet with a student on an issue of interest to the student—when that was the only request the student made. However, significantly more faculty members (78%) were willing to agree to that same request if they had first refused the student's request to meet for two hours a week for the rest of the semester.

Social Proof

If you can keep your head when people all around you are losing theirs, you probably haven't grasped the situation.

—Jean Kerr

People frequently use the beliefs, attitudes, and actions of others, particularly similar others, as a standard of comparison against which to evaluate the correctness of their own beliefs, attitudes, and actions. Thus, it is common for individuals to decide on appropriate behaviors for themselves in a given situation by searching for information as to how similar others have behaved or are behaving in that situation—a phenomenon social psychologists have long recognized (e.g., Asch, 1956; Bandura & Menlove, 1968; Darley & Latane, 1970). This simple principle of behavior accounts for an amazingly varied army of human responses. For instance, research has shown that hotel guests use it when deciding whether to reuse their towels (Goldstein, Cialdini, & Griskevicius, 2008), amusement park visitors use it to decide whether to litter in a public place (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990), audience members use it in deciding whether a joke is funny (Provine, 2000), National Park visitors use it when deciding whether to commit theft (Cialdini, 2003), pedestrians use it in deciding whether to stop and stare at an empty spot in the sky (Milgram, Bickman, & Berkowitz, 1969), alarmingly, college students use it to judge that torture is proper in military interrogations (Aramovich, Lytle, & Sitka, 2012), and, even more alarmingly, troubled individuals use it in deciding whether to commit suicide (Phillips & Carstensen, 1988).

Much of this evidence can be understood in terms of Festinger's (1954) *social comparison theory,* which states that (a) people have a constant drive to evaluate themselves (i.e., the appropriateness of their abilities, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors); (b) if available, people will prefer to use objective cues to make these evaluations; (c) if objective evidence is not available, people will rely on social comparison evidence instead; and (d) when seeking social comparison evidence for self-evaluations, people will look to similar others as the preferred basis for comparison.

When the goal is to evaluate the correctness of an opinion or action, research has generally supported the theory. Social comparison is most likely to occur in situations that are objectively unclear (Higgs, 2015; Zitek & Hebl, 2007) and is most likely to involve similar others (Cruwys, Bevelander, & Hermans, 2015; Platow et al., 2005). For example, people are strongly influenced by the behavior of others when deciding whether to conserve energy in their homes (Schultz, Nolan, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Griskevicius, 2007). However, the influence of others' conservation behaviors increased as those others became more similar to the actual home resident: Whereas other citizens of the state had an effect on conservation, behavior was more strongly influenced by the residents of the same city and even more strongly influenced by the residents of their own neighborhood (Nolan, Schultz, Cialdini, Goldstein, & Griskevicius, 2008).

The *social proof rule* for compliance can be stated as follows: *One should be more willing to comply with a request for behavior if the action fits with what similar others are thinking or doing.* Our tendency to assume that an action is more correct if others are performing it is employed in a variety of commercial settings. Bartenders often "salt" their tip jars with a few dollar bills at the beginning of the evening to simulate tips left by prior customers and, thereby, to give the impression that tipping with folded money is proper barroom behavior (Griskevicius, Cialdini, & Goldstein, 2008). Restaurant managers identify the most popular items on their menus, with a positive effect on proceeds (Cai, Chen, & Feng, 2009). Advertisers love to inform us when a product is the "fastest growing" or "largest selling" because they do not have to convince us directly that the product is good; they need only say that many others think so, which seems proof enough (Griskevicius et al., 2009). The producers of charity telethons devote inordinate amounts of time to the incessant listing of viewers who have already pledged contributions. The message being communicated to the holdouts is clear: "Look at all the people who have decided to give; it *must* be the correct thing to do" (see Surowiecki, 2005).

Another tactic that compliance professionals use to engage the principle of social proof has been put to scientific test. Called the *list technique,* it involves asking for a request only after the target person has been shown a list of similar others who have already complied. Reingen (1982) conducted several experiments in which college students or homeowners were asked to donate money or blood to a charitable cause. Those individuals who were initially shown a list of similar others who had already complied were significantly more likely to comply themselves. What's more, the longer the list, the greater was the effect. In sum, when it comes to social proof, the more you see, the more there will be.

Consistency

It is easier to resist at the beginning than at the end.

—Leonardo da Vinci

Social psychologists have long understood the strength of the consistency principle to direct human action. Prominent early theorists such as Theodore Newcomb (1953), Leon Festinger (1957), and Fritz

Heider (1958) viewed the desire for consistency as a prime motivator of behavior. Other theorists (e.g., Baumeister, 1982) recognized that the desire to *appear* consistent exerts considerable influence over our behavior as well. If we grant that the power of consistency is formidable in directing human action, an important practical question immediately arises: How is that force engaged? Social psychologists think they know the answer—through commitment. If a person can get you to make a commitment (i.e., to take action, to go on record), that person will have set the stage for your consistency with the earlier commitment. Once a stand is taken, there is a natural tendency to behave in ways that are stubbornly consistent with the stand (Burger & Caldwell, 2003; Clifford & Jerit, 2016).

A *consistency rule* for compliance can be worded as follows: *After committing themselves to a position, people become more willing to comply with requests for behaviors that are congruent with that position.* Any of a variety of strategies may be used to generate the crucial instigating commitment. One such strategy is the *foot-in-the-door technique* (Freedman & Fraser, 1966). A solicitor using this procedure will first ask for a small favor that is almost certain to be granted. The initial compliance is then followed by a request for a larger, *related* favor. Research has repeatedly shown that people who have agreed to the initial small favor become more willing to do the larger one, seemingly to be consistent with the implication of the initial action (for reviews, see Burger, 1999; Pascual & Gueguen, 2005).

Freedman and Fraser (1966) have argued that the foot-in-the-door technique is successful because performance of the initially requested action causes individuals to see themselves as possessing certain traits (e.g., "I am the sort of person who helps others" or "I am the sort of person who says yes to legitimate requests."). This explanation has received good support (e.g., Burger & Caldwell, 2003; Burger & Guadagno, 2003; Dolinski, 2000). For example, children are not influenced by the foot-in-the-door technique until they are old enough to understand the idea of a stable personality trait (around six to seven years); moreover, once children are old enough to understand the meaning of a stable trait, the foot-in-the-door tactic becomes especially effective among those children who prefer consistency in behavior (Eisenberg, Cialdini, McCreath, & Shell, 1987).

Other, more unsavory techniques induce a commitment to an item and then remove the inducements that generated the commitment. Remarkably, the commitment frequently remains. For example, the *bait-and-switch procedure* is used by some retailers who may advertise certain merchandise (e.g., a room of furniture) at a special low price. When customers arrive to take advantage of the special, they find the merchandise of low quality or sold out. However, because they have by now made an active commitment to getting new furniture at that particular store, they are more willing to agree to examine and, consequently, buy alternative merchandise there (Joule, Gouilloux, & Weber, 1989).

A similar strategy is often employed by car dealers in the *low-ball technique,* which proceeds by obtaining a commitment to a specified action and then increasing the costs of performing the action (Cialdini, Cacioppo, Bassett, & Miller, 1978). The automobile salesperson who "throws the low ball" induces the customer to decide to buy a particular model car by offering a low price on the car or an inflated one on the customer's trade-in. After the decision has been made (and, at times, after the commitment is enhanced by allowing the customer to arrange financing, take the car home overnight, etc.), something happens to remove the reason the customer decided to buy. Perhaps a price calculation error is found, or the used car assessor disallows the inflated trade-in figure. By this time, though, many customers have experienced an internal commitment to that specific automobile and proceed with the purchase. Experimental research has documented the effectiveness of this tactic in settings beyond automobile sales (e.g., Gueguen. Pascual, & Dagot, 2002; for a review, see Burger & Caputo, 2015).

One thing that these procedures (and others like them) have in common is the establishment of an earlier commitment that is consistent with a later action desired by the compliance professional. The need for consistency then takes over to compel performance of the desired behavior, often for considerable lengths of time (Lokhorst, Werner, Staats, van Dijk, & Gale, 2013; Sharot, Fleming, Yu, Koster, & Dolan, 2012). Even mere reminders of past commitments can spur individuals to act in accord with those earlier positions (Grant & Dutton, 2012; van der Werff, Steg, & Keizer, 2014).

A more manipulative tactic than merely focusing people on their existing values is to put them in a situation in which to refuse a specific request would be inconsistent with a value that people wish to be known as possessing. One such tactic is the *legitimization-of-paltry favors* (or even-a-penny-would-help) *technique* (Cialdini & Schroeder, 1976). Most people prefer to behave in ways that are consistent with a public (and private) image as helpful, charitable individuals. Consequently, a fund-\raiser who makes a request that legitimizes a paltry amount of aid ("Could you give a contribution, even a penny would help") makes it difficult for a target to refuse to give at all; to do so risks appearing to be a very unhelpful person. Notice that this procedure does not specifically request a trivial sum; that would probably lead to a profusion of pennies and a small total take. Instead, the request simply makes a minuscule form of aid acceptable, thereby reducing the target's ability to give nothing and still remain consistent with the desirable image of a helpful individual. After all, how could a person retain a helpful image after refusing to contribute when "even a penny would help"? Experimental research done to validate the effectiveness of the technique has shown it to be successful in increasing the percentage of charity contributors and total monetary contributions (for a review, see Lee, Moon, & Feeley, 2016).

Liking

The main work of a trial attorney is to make the jury like his client.

—Clarence Darrow

A fact of social interaction to which each of us can attest is that people are more favorably inclined toward the needs of those they know and like. Consequently, a *friendship/liking rule* for compliance can be worded as follows: *We should be more willing to comply with the requests of friends or other liked individuals.* Could there be any doubt that this is the case after examining the remarkable success of the Tupperware Corporation and their "home party" demonstration concept (Frenzen & Davis, 1990)? The demonstration party for Tupperware products is hosted by an individual, usually a woman, who invites to her home an array of friends, neighbors, and relatives, all of whom know that their hostess receives a percentage of the profits from every piece sold by the Tupperware representative, who is also there. In this way, the Tupperware Corporation arranges for its customers to buy from and *for* a friend rather than from an unknown salesperson. So favorable has been the effect on proceeds ($3 million in sales per day!) that the Tupperware Corporation has wholly abandoned its early retail outlets, and a Tupperware party begins somewhere every 2.7 seconds (Cialdini, 2008). Indeed, the success of this strategy has inspired many companies to use parties to sell their products, including cosmetics, arts and crafts, and even video games.

Most influence agents, however, attempt to engage the friendship/liking principle in a different way: Before making a request, they get their targets to like *them.* Studies show that a surprisingly underestimated component of liking stems from one's grooming and physical attractiveness, with good-looking people being more influential (e.g., Chaiken, 1979; Lynn & Simons, 2000; McCall, 1997). But two other approaches have been shown to be particularly effective at increasing liking: similarity and compliments.

We like people who are similar to us (Burger et al., 2004; Carli, Ganley, & Pierce-Otay, 1991). This fact seems to hold true whether the similarity occurs in the area of opinions, personality traits, background, or lifestyle. Not only has research demonstrated that even trivial similarities can increase liking and have profound effects on important decisions such as careers and marriage partners (e.g., Garner, 2005; Jones, Pelham, Carvallo, & Mirenberg, 2004; Pelham, Mirenberg, & Jones, 2002), but perceived attitude similarity

between yourself and a stranger can automatically activate kinship cognitions, inducing a person to behave prosocially toward that similar other (Park & Schaller, 2005). Consequently, those who wish to be liked to increase our compliance can accomplish that purpose by appearing similar to us in any of a wide variety of ways. For that reason, it would be wise to be careful around salespeople who *seem* to be just like us. Many sales training programs urge trainees to "mirror and match" the customer's body posture, mood, and verbal style, as similarities along each of these dimensions have been shown to lead to positive results (Maddux, Mullen, & Galinski, 2008; van Baaren, Holland, Steenaert, & van Knippenberg, 2003). Similarity in dress provides still another example. Several studies have demonstrated that we are more likely to help those who dress like us. In one study, done in the early 1970s when young people tended to dress either in "hippie" or "straight" fashion, experimenters donned hippie or straight attire and asked college students on campus for money to make a phone call. When the experimenter was dressed in the same way as the student, the request was granted in over two thirds of the instances, but when the student and requester were dissimilarly dressed, money was provided less than half of the time (Emswiller, Deaux, & Willits, 1971).

Praise, compliments, and other forms of positive estimation also stimulate liking (e.g., Gordon, 1996; Howard et al., 1995, 1997; Vonk, 2002). The actor Maclain Stevenson once described how his wife tricked him into marriage: "She said she liked me." Although designed for a laugh, the remark is as much instructive as humorous. The simple information that someone fancies us can be a bewitchingly effective device for producing return liking and willing compliance. Although there are limits to our gullibility—especially when we can be sure that the flatterer's intent is manipulative (Jones & Wortman, 1973)—we tend as a rule to believe praise and to like those who provide it. Evidence for the power of praise on liking comes from a study (Drachman, deCarufel, & Insko, 1978) in which men received personal comments from someone who needed a favor from them. Some of the men got only positive comments, some only negative comments, and some got a mixture of good and bad. There were three interesting findings. First, the evaluator who offered only praise was liked best. Second, this was so even though the men fully realized that the flatterer stood to gain from their liking of him. Finally, unlike the other types of comments, pure praise did not have to be accurate to work. Compliments produced just as much liking for the flatterer when they were untrue as when they were true. Because of this, salespeople are educated in the art of praise. A potential customer's home, clothes, car, taste, etc. are all frequent targets for compliments.

Scarcity

The way to love anything is to realize that it might be lost.

—Gilbert Keith Chesterton

Opportunities seem more valuable to us when they are less available (Lynn, 1991; McKensie & Chase, 2010). Interestingly, this is often true even when the opportunity holds little attraction for us on its own merits. Take, as evidence, the experience of Florida State University students who, like most undergraduates, rated themselves as dissatisfied with the quality of their cafeteria's food. Nine days later, they had changed their minds, rating that food significantly better than they had before. It is instructive that no actual improvement in food service had occurred between the two ratings. Instead, earlier in the day of the second rating students had learned that because of a fire, they could not eat at the cafeteria for two weeks (West, 1975).

There appear to be two major sources of the power of scarcity. First, because we know that the things that are difficult to possess are typically better than those that are easy to possess, we can often use an item's availability to help us quickly and correctly decide on its quality (Lynn, 1992). Thus, one reason for the potency of scarcity is that, by assessing it, we can obtain a quick indication of an item's value.

In addition, there is a unique, secondary source of power within scarcity: As the things we can have become less available, we lose freedoms, and we *hate* to lose the freedoms we already have. This desire to preserve our established prerogatives is the centerpiece of *psychological reactance theory* (Brehm, 1981; Burgoon, Alvaro, Grandpre, & Voulodakis, 2002) developed to explain the human response to diminishing personal control. According to the theory, whenever our freedoms are limited or threatened, the need to retain those freedoms makes us want them (as well as the goods and services associated with them) significantly more than we previously did. So, when increasing scarcity—or anything else—interferes with our prior access to some item, we will *react against* the interference by wanting and trying to possess the item more than before. For example, individuals typically respond to censorship by wanting to receive the banned information to a greater extent and by becoming more favorable to it than before the ban (e.g., Brown, 2008; Worchel, 1992). Especially interesting is the finding that people will come to believe in banned information more even though they have not received it (Worchel, Arnold, & Baker, 1975).

A *scarcity rule* for compliance can be worded as follows: *One should try to secure those opportunities that are scarce or dwindling.* With scarcity operating powerfully on the worth assigned to things, it is not surprising that compliance professionals have a variety of techniques designed to convert this power to compliance. Probably the most frequently used technique is the "limited number" tactic in which the customer is informed that membership opportunities, products, or services exist in a limited supply that cannot be guaranteed to last for long. For example, at one large grocery chain, brand promotions that included a purchase limit ("Only X per customer") more than doubled sales for seven different types of products compared to promotions for the same products that didn't include a purchase limit (Inman, Peter, & Raghubir, 1997). Other research has suggested that, in addition to commodities, limited access to information makes the information more desirable and more influential (Brock, 1968; Brock & Bannon, 1992). For instance, wholesale beef buyers who were told of an impending imported beef shortage purchased significantly more beef when they were informed that the shortage information came from certain "exclusive" contacts that the importer had (Knishinsky, 1982). Apparently, the fact that the scarcity news was itself scarce made it more valued and persuasive.

Related to the limited number tactic is the "deadline" technique in which an official time limit is placed on the customer's opportunity to get what is being offered. Newspaper ads abound with admonitions to the customer regarding the folly of delay: "Last three days." "Limited time offer." "One week only sale." The purest form of a decision deadline—right now—occurs in a variant of the deadline technique in which customers are told that unless they make an immediate purchase decision, they will have to buy the item at a higher price, or they will not be able to purchase it at all.

The idea of potential loss plays a large role in human decision-making (see Chapter 19). In fact, people seem to be more motivated by the thought of losing something than by the thought of gaining something of equal value (Hobofoll, 2001; Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). For instance, homeowners told about how much money they could lose from inadequate insulation are more likely to insulate their homes than those told about how much money they could save (Gonzales, Aronson, & Costanzo, 1988). Similar results have been obtained on college campuses where students experienced much stronger emotions when asked to imagine losses rather than gains in their romantic relationships or grade point averages (Ketelaar, 1995).

Authority

> *Follow an expert.*
>
> —Virgil

Legitimately constituted authorities are extremely influential persons (e.g., Aronson, Turner, & Carlsmith, 1963; Blass, 2004; Burger, 2009; Milgram, 1974). Whether they have acquired their positions through knowledge, talent, or fortune, their positions bespeak of superior information and power. For each of us, this has always been the case. Early on, these people (e.g., parents, teachers) knew more than us, and we found that taking their advice proved beneficial—partly because of their greater wisdom and partly because they controlled our rewards and punishments. As adults, the authority figures have changed to employers, judges, police officers, and the like, but the benefits associated with doing as they say have not. For most people, then, conforming to the dictates of authority figures produces genuine practical advantages. Consequently, it makes great sense to comply with the wishes of properly constituted authorities. It makes so much sense, in fact, that people often do so when it makes no sense at all.

The most dramatic research evidence for the power of legitimate authority comes from the famous Milgram experiment in which 65% of the subjects were willing to deliver continued, intense, and dangerous levels of electric shock to a kicking, screeching, pleading other subject simply because an authority figure—in this case a scientist—directed them to do so. Although almost everyone who has ever taken a psychology course has learned about this experiment, Milgram (1974) conducted a series of variations on his basic procedure that are less well known but equally compelling in making the point about the powerful role that authority played in causing subjects to behave so cruelly. For instance, in one variation, Milgram had the scientist and the victim switch scripts so that the scientist told the subject to stop delivering shock to the victim, while the victim insisted bravely that the subject continue for the good of the experiment. The results couldn't have been clearer: Not a single subject gave even one additional shock when it was a nonauthority who demanded it. Even more than 30 years later, replications of Milgram's classic studies continue to demonstrate the power of authority (Burger, 2009; Dolinski et al., 2015).

An *authority rule* for compliance can be worded as follows: *One should be more willing to follow the suggestions of someone who is a legitimate authority.* Authorities may be seen as falling into two categories: authorities with regard to the specific situation and more general authorities. Compliance practitioners employ techniques that seek to benefit from the power invested in authority figures of both types. In the case of authority relevant to a specific situation, we can note how often advertisers inform their audiences of the level of expertise of product manufacturers (e.g., "Fashionable men's clothiers since 1841"; "Babies are our business, our only business").

At times, the expertise associated with a product has been more symbolic than substantive, for instance, when actors in television commercials wear physicians' white coats to recommend a product. In one famous coffee commercial, the actor involved, Robert Young, did not need a white coat, as his prior identity as TV doctor Marcus Welby, M.D., provided the medical connection. It is instructive that the mere symbols of a physician's expertise and authority are enough to trip the mechanism that governs authority influence. One of the most prominent of these symbols, the bare title "Dr.," has been shown to be devastatingly effective as a compliance device among trained hospital personnel. In what may be the most frightening study we know, a group of physicians and nurses conducted an experiment that documented the dangerous degree of blind obedience that hospital nurses accorded to an individual whom they had never met, but who claimed in a phone call to be a doctor (Hofling, Brotzman, Dalrymple, Graves, & Pierce, 1966). Ninety-five percent of those nurses were willing to administer an unsafe level of a drug merely because a caller they thought was a doctor requested it.

In the case of influence that generalizes outside of relevant expertise, the impact of authority (real and symbolic) appears equally impressive. For instance, researchers have found that when wearing a security guard's uniform, a requester could produce more compliance with requests (e.g., to pick up a paper bag in the street, to stand on the other side of a bus stop sign) that were irrelevant to a security guard's domain of authority (Bickman, 1974; Bushman, 1988). Less blatant in its connotation than a uniform, but nonetheless effective, is another kind of attire that has traditionally bespoken of authority status in our culture—the well-tailored business suit. Take as evidence the results of a study by Lefkowitz, Blake, and Mouton (1955), who found that three and a half times as many people were willing to follow a jaywalker into traffic when he wore a suit and tie versus a work shirt and trousers.

Unity

> We is the shared me.
>
> —Robert B. Cialdini

Automatically and incessantly, observers divide people into those to whom the pronoun "we" does and does not apply. The implications for compliance are great because, inside the former category, everything influence-related is easier to achieve. Ingroup members get more agreement (Stallen, Smidts, & Sanfey, 2013), trust (Foddy, Platow, & Yamagishi, 2009), help (Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014), liking (Cialdini et al., 1997), cooperation (Balliet, Wu, & De Dreu, 2014), emotional support (Westmaas & Silver, 2006), forgiveness (Karremans & Aarts, 2007), and even more judged creativity (Adarves-Yorno, Haslam, & Postmes, 2008), morality (Gino & Galinsky, 2012), and humanity (Brant & Reyna, 2011). This favoritism seems not only far-ranging in its impact on human action but also primal, as it appears in other primates and spontaneously in human children as young as infants (Buttleman & Bohm, 2014; Mahajan et al., 2011). Thus, social influence is often and importantly grounded in personal relationships.

Still, a crucial question remains: What kind of relationships maximize the favorable treatment of fellow members? The answer requires a subtle but crucial distinction. The relationships that most effectively lead people to favor another are not those that allow them to say, "Oh, that person is like us." They are the ones that allow people to say, "Oh, that person is *of* us." The experience of *unity* is not about simple similarities (although those can work, too, but to a lesser degree, via the liking principle). It's about identities, shared identities. It's about the categories that individuals use to define themselves and their groups such as race, ethnicity, nationality, and family, as well as political and religious affiliations. A key characteristic of these categories is that their members feel at one with, merged with, the others. A *unity rule* for compliance can be worded as: *We are inclined to say "yes" to someone we consider one of us.*

Social scientists have uncovered two categories of factors that lead to a sense of we-ness or shared identity—those involving particular ways of being together and particular ways of acting together. Each deserves our examination.

Being together. From a genetic point of view, *kinship*—being in the same family, the same bloodline—is the ultimate form of self-other unity. Indeed, the widely accepted concept of "inclusive fitness" within evolutionary biology specifically undermines the distinction between self and genetically close others, asserting that individuals do not so much attempt to ensure their own survival as the survival of copies of their genes. The crucial implication is that the *self* in self-interest can lie outside of one's body and inside the skin of another who shares a goodly amount of genetic material. For this reason, people are particularly willing to help genetically close relatives (Curry, Roberts, & Dunbar, 2013). Brain-imaging research has identified a proximate cause: People experience unusually high stimulation in the reward centers of their brains after aiding a family member; it's as if, by doing so, they are aiding themselves (Telzer et al., 2010).

Besides family ties, there is another usually reliable cue of heightened genetic commonality. It is the perception of *being of the same place* as another. Because we evolved from small but stable groupings of genetically related individuals, we have also evolved a tendency to feel *of* the people who exist in close proximity to us. Sports team championships stimulate feelings of personal pride in residents of the team's

surrounding zones—as if the *residents* had won (Cialdini et al., 1976; Kwon, Trail, & Lee, 2008). In addition, we favor those in our locales. In one study, citizens agreed to participate in a survey to a greater extent if it emanated from a home-state university (Edwards, Dillman, & Smyth, 2014); in another study, readers of a news story about a military fatality in Afghanistan became more opposed to the war there upon learning that the fallen soldier was from their own state (Kriner & Shen, 2012).

People also succumb to a "local dominance effect," in which they are especially moved by the urgings of local voices (Zell & Alike, 2010). During the 2008 presidential election campaign, Obama officials made strategic use of this effect by encouraging pro-Obama door-to-door and phone volunteers to employ scripts describing their local credentials (Masket, 2009).

Acting together. All human societies have developed ways to respond together, in unison or synchrony, inside songs, marches, rituals, chants, prayers, and dances. What's more, they've been doing so since prehistoric times. The behavioral science record is clear as to why. When people act in unitary ways, they become unit*ized* (Paladino et al., 2010). The effects are similar to those encountered in our coverage of common kinship and place—feelings of self-other merger (we-ness), and consequent supportiveness (Wheatley et al., 2012).

The feeling of becoming merged with others through coordinated activity can be produced easily. In one set of studies, participants played a game in which to win money they were required to make either the same choice as their partner or a different choice. Compared to the participants who had to win by mismatching choices, those who had to win by matching choices with their partner came to see that individual as significantly more comparable to them. There was something about performing in exactly the same way as another person that led to greater perceived alikeness (Able & Stasser, 2008). Moreover, when people act in unison, they not only see themselves as more alike, they also evaluate one another more positively afterward; their elevated like*ness* turns into elevated lik*ing*, which turns into elevated cooperation and support (Wheatley et al., 2012; Wiltermuth & Heath, 2009).

There's another form of collaborative action that leads to unitization—*co-creation*. Companies often try to get consumers bonded with their brands by inviting them to co-create novel or updated products and services, most often by providing ongoing feedback to the company. But there is a specific form that consumers' input must take to produce optimal bonding to the brand: It must be offered as *advice* regarding the company's offerings, not as *opinions* about its offerings. Why? Because providing advice puts a person in a merging state of mind, which stimulates a linking of one's own identity with another party's. Providing an opinion, on the other hand, puts a person in a self-focused, introspective state of mind that is less likely to produce bonding.

That's what happened to online survey-takers from around the U.S. who were shown a description of the business plan for a new restaurant. All survey participants were asked for their feedback—but some for any "advice" they might have, whereas others for any "opinions" they might have regarding the restaurant. Finally, they indicated how likely they'd be to patronize the restaurant. Those participants who provided advice reported wanting to visit the restaurant significantly more than participants who provided opinions. And, just as would be expected if giving advice is indeed a mechanism of unitization, the increased desire to support the restaurant came from feeling more personally linked to the brand (Liu & Gal, 2011).

Social Influence Today

Whereas influencing behavior through social factors—social influence—is distinctly different from influencing behavior through economic factors, social influence today is increasingly characterized by approaches that use combinations of social and economic factors. For example, a recent study found that providing small financial incentives was more effective than using social factors (providing information pertaining to social proof) at motivating customers to write an online review after purchasing a product (Burtch, Hong, Bapna, & Griskevicius, 2017). However, the reviews stimulated by financial incentives tended to be brief and not very useful. Instead, providing social proof information motivated customers to write longer and more informative reviews compared to when they were provided only with financial incentives. While using either social proof or small financial incentives proved to be suboptimal for different reasons, the approach that yielded the greatest overall benefit was using a *combination* of social proof and small financial incentives, which produced the largest number and the greatest length of reviews. Future research is poised to examine how social influence can work in concert with other types of incentives to influence behavior in optimal ways.

Also, although much research has documented *which* social influences are most effective, much less attention has been paid to *when* those influences are most effective. We expect future research to demonstrate the importance of timing within the influence process. For example, because the previously described seven principles of influence often operate as behavioral heuristics—single-factor rules of thumb that typically inform individuals of when to act correctly—we believe the principles will be most often followed under circumstances that favor heuristic rather than fully considered decision-making (Chaiken, 1987; Kahneman, 2011; also see Chapter 6). That is, people will most likely respond to these principles when they have first come to feel unable or unmotivated to perform a deliberative analysis of all relevant factors and will rely on a normally reliable single factor (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Owing to the accelerating pace and complexity of today's world, we anticipate progressively more such heuristic responding as people increasingly feel unsure, rushed, overloaded, preoccupied, indifferent, stressed, or distracted whenever encountering an influence attempt.

Finally, besides the impact of such naturally existing prior life conditions on the influence process, we think researchers are also likely to document the impact of situationally placed prior conditions on the process. There is growing evidence that savvy communicators can greatly affect their success not just by what they put into their messages but, as well, by what they put into the moment just before they send those messages—an approach called *pre-suasion* (Cialdini, 2016). The claim is: To change recipients' minds optimally, one should first change their states of mind. This is accomplished by using devices (cognitive sets, primes, frames, or anchors) to *ready* recipients for an influence attempt and, thereby, to make them sympathetic to a message before they experience it.

Support for the contentions comes from both influence scientists and influence practitioners. In the first case, consider the results of studies showing that the effect a social proof message for a museum ("Visited by over a Million People Each Year") was significantly enhanced by initially showing recipients a scary movie. Why? Because when people are in a frightened state of mind, they are particularly likely to seek the safety provided by the crowd (Griskevicius et al., 2009). In the domain of marketing practice, consider what happened in 2016 when Royal Caribbean International Cruise Lines offered a scarcity-based promotion to its customers—a deal that had a dwindling, limited time character. Half of the customers learned of the offer in an email that had a pair of ticking clock emojis in the subject line; the other half received the same scarcity-based offer but without the emojis. Remarkably, although only 3% more customers who saw the emojis opened the email, 15% more of those who did then clicked through the message to be able to purchase the deal. Why? Because, according to the marketers, the scarcity-based emojis put customers in mind of the principle of scarcity, which primed them for the scarcity appeal before they experienced it. As a result, the pre-suasive approach "created a several hundred percent increase in revenue" (BEHAVE, 2016). Outcomes such as these suggest a worthwhile direction for future investigation.

Summary

At the outset of this chapter, it was suggested that an important question for anyone interested in understanding, resisting, or harnessing the process of interpersonal influence is, "Which are the most powerful principles that motivate us to comply with another's request?" It was also suggested that one way to assess such power would be to examine the practices of commercial compliance professionals for their pervasiveness. That is, if compliance practitioners made widespread use of certain principles, this would be evidence for the natural power of these principles to affect everyday compliance. Seven psychological principles emerged as the most popular in the repertoires of the compliance pros: reciprocity, social proof, consistency, liking, scarcity, authority, and unity. Close examination of the principles revealed broad professional usage that could be validated and explained by controlled experimental research. As with most research perspectives, additional work needs to be done before we can have high levels of confidence in the conclusions. However, there is considerable evidence at this juncture to indicate that these principles engage central features of the human condition in the process of motivating compliance.

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