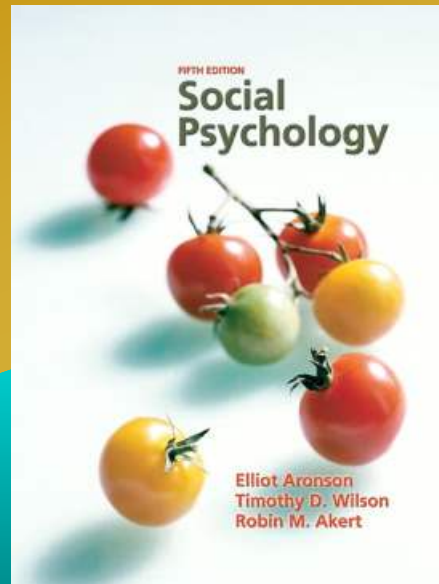


# Chapter 8

## Conformity:

### Influencing Behavior



Aronson Social Psychology, 5/e  
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# **PowerPoint Presentation**

**Prepared By**

**Fred W. Whitford**

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# Chapter Outline

## **I. Conformity: When and Why**

A yellow triangle pointing downwards, partially overlapping the word 'Conformity'.

# Conformity

***Conformity*** is a change in behavior due to the real or imagined influence of others.



# Conformity

**American culture celebrates the rugged individualist, but even in our own culture extremes of conformity occur.**



# Chapter Outline

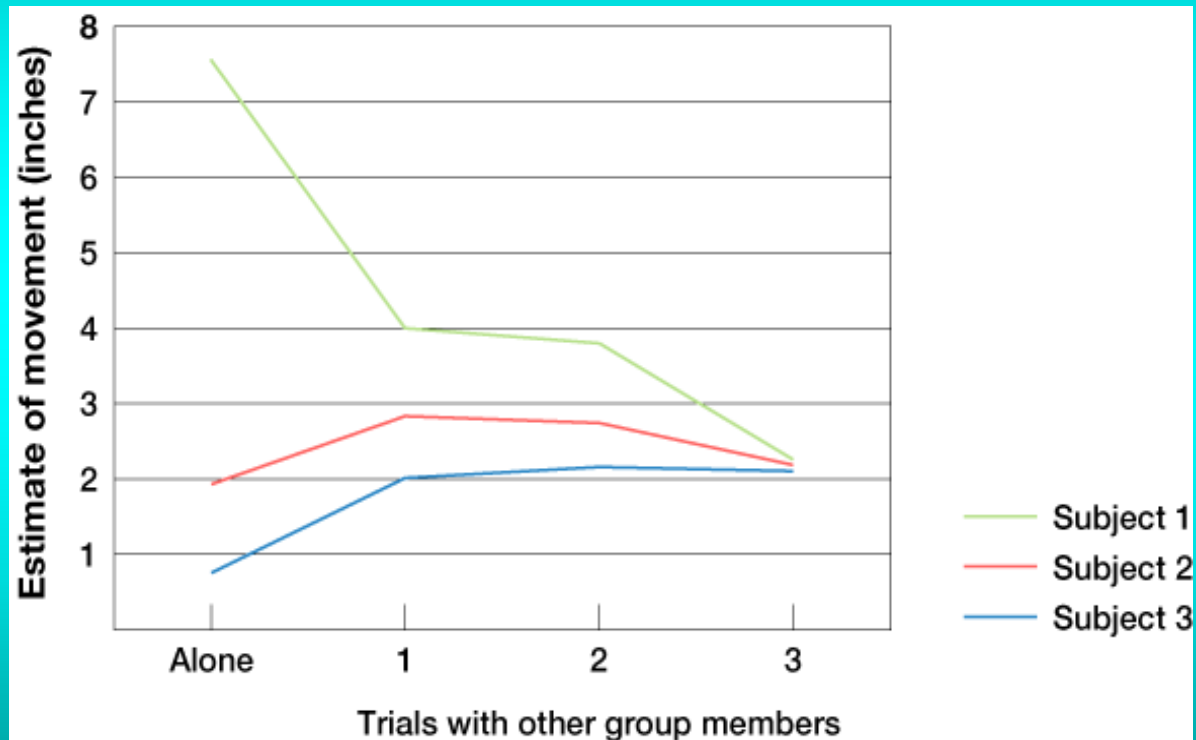
## **II. Informational Social Influence: The Need to Know What's “Right”**



# Informational Social Influence

***Informational social influence*** is the influence of other people that leads us to conform because we see them as a source of information to guide our behavior; we conform because we believe that others' interpretation of an ambiguous situation is more correct than ours and will help us choose an appropriate course of action.

# Informational Social Influence







# Informational Social Influence

An important aspect of informational social influence is that it can result in *private acceptance*, when people conform to other people's behavior because they believe that what they are doing or saying is correct.



# Informational Social Influence

A less likely result of informational social influence is *public compliance*, when people conform to other people's behavior publicly, without necessarily believing in what they are doing or saying.



# **Informational Social Influence**

- **The Importance of Being Accurate**

**Baron and colleagues (1996) found that when the outcome of the task is very important, we are more likely to succumb to informational social influence than when the task outcome is of low importance.**



# Informational Social Influence

- **When Informational Conformity Backfires**

Depending on others to help us define the situation can backfire. One example is *contagion*, the rapid transmission of emotions or behaviors through a crowd.



# Informational Social Influence

- **When Informational Conformity Backfires**

Another example of informational conformity backfiring is *mass psychogenic illness*, the occurrence, in a group of people, of similar physiological symptoms with no known physical cause.



# **Informational Social Influence**

- **When Will People Conform to Informational Social Influence?**

**When the situation is ambiguous.**

**When the situation is a crisis.**

**When other people are experts.**



# **Informational Social Influence**

- **Resisting Informational Social Influence**

**To resist undue informational social influence, consider whether or not others' view of a situation is any more legitimate than your own. Understanding how informational social influence works will help one know when it is useful and when it is harmful.**



# Chapter Outline

## **III. Normative Social Influence: The Need to Be Accepted**





# Normative Social Influence

People conform to a group's *social norms*, the implicit or explicit rules a group has for the acceptable behaviors, values, and beliefs of its members.



# Normative Social Influence

Humans are a social species and thus have a fundamental need for companionship that forms the basis for *normative social influence*, conformity in order to be liked and accepted by others.



## **Normative Social Influence**

**A likely result of normative social influence is public compliance, when people conform to other people's behavior publicly, without necessarily believing in what they are doing or saying.**



# **Normative Social Influence**

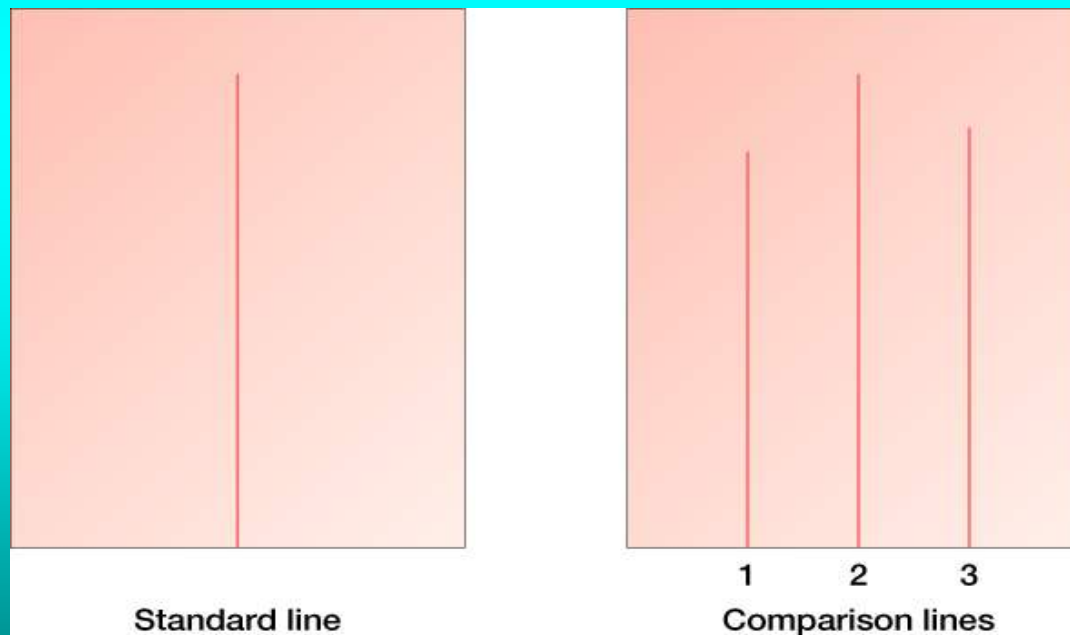
- **Conformity and Social Approval: The Asch Line Judgment Studies**

**Asch (1951, 1956) tested whether people would conform in situations in which the group's judgments were obviously incorrect.**

**Participants in the Asch line study showed a high level of conformity, given how obvious it was that the group was wrong in its judgments.**

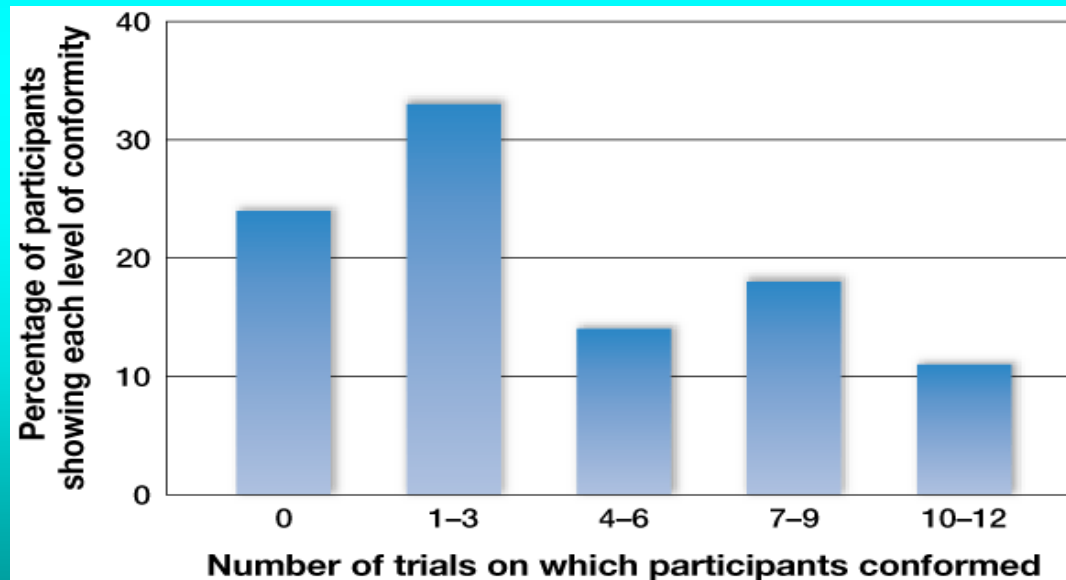
# Normative Social Influence

- **Conformity and Social Approval: The Asch Line Judgment Studies**



# Normative Social Influence

- **Conformity and Social Approval: The Asch Line Judgment Studies**





# **Normative Social Influence**

- **The Importance of Being Accurate, Revisited**

**Baron and colleagues (1996) found that people are less likely to conform to a group's obviously wrong judgment when the task is important than when the task is not important. Yet, even when the task is meaningful, people still conform due to normative social influence.**



# **Normative Social Influence**

- **The Importance of Accountability**





# **Normative Social Influence**

- **The Consequences of Resisting Normative Social Influence**

**When someone manages to resist normative group influence, other group members try to convince the deviant group member to conform; if he or she does not, eventually the deviant will be rejected.**



# **Normative Social Influence**

- **Normative Social Influence in Everyday Life**

**Normative social influence helps explain women's attempts to create socially desired body types through dieting and possibly eating disorders.**

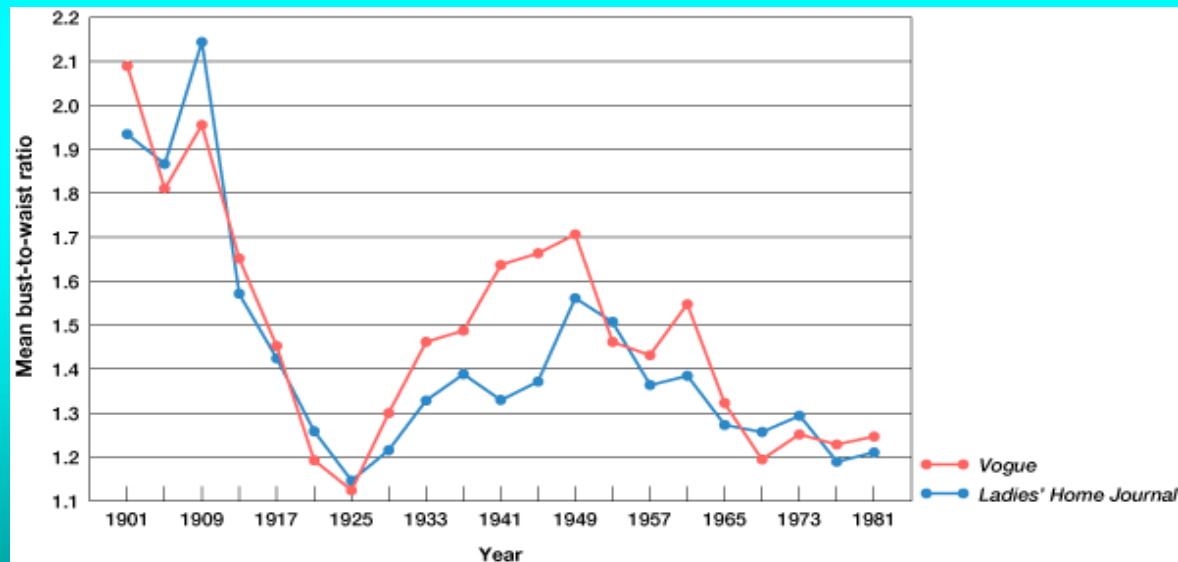
# Normative Social Influence

- Normative Social Influence in Everyday Life

		Reliability of the food supply in the culture							
		Very unreliable (7 cultures)	Moderately unreliable (6 cultures)	Moderately reliable (36 cultures)	Very reliable (5 cultures)				
Ideal body type in the culture (preference indicated in percentages)	Heavy body	71%	50%	39%	40%				
	Moderate body	29%	33%	39%	20%				
	Slender body	0%	17%	22%	40%				
		100%		83%		78%		60%	

# Normative Social Influence

- Normative Social Influence in Everyday Life





# **Normative Social Influence**

- **Normative Social Influence in Everyday Life**

**Recent studies have found that men now are pressured to create socially desired body types through dieting and possibly eating disorders.**



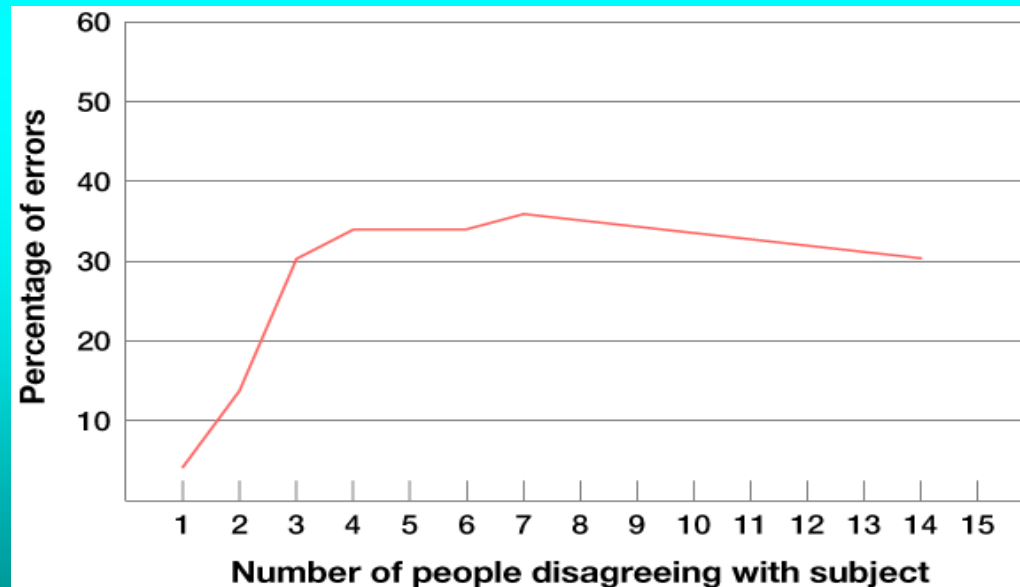
# Normative Social Influence

- **When Will People Conform to Normative Social Influence?**

Latané's *social impact theory* suggests that conforming to normative pressures depends on the strength, immediacy, and number of other people in a group.

# Normative Social Influence

- **When Will People Conform to Normative Social Influence?**





# **Normative Social Influence**

- **When Will People Conform to Normative Social Influence?**

**Asch's research show that conformity does not increase much after group size reaches 4 or 5 other people.**





# **Normative Social Influence**

- **When Will People Conform to Normative Social Influence?**

**Normative pressures are much stronger when they come from people whose friendship, love, or respect we cherish.**



# **Normative Social Influence**

- **When Will People Conform to Normative Social Influence?**

**People from collectivist cultures are more likely to conform to normative social influence than are people from individualist cultures.**



# **Normative Social Influence**

- **When Will People Conform to Normative Social Influence?**

**Some evidence suggests that people with low self-esteem are more likely to conform compared to people with high self-esteem.**



# **Normative Social Influence**

- **When Will People Conform to Normative Social Influence?**

**Gender differences in conformity are small and depend on the type of situation in which conformity is measured.**



# **Normative Social Influence**

- **Resisting Normative Social Influence**

**The first step in resisting normative social influence is to become aware that we are doing it. The second step is to find an ally who thinks like we do.**



# Normative Social Influence

- **Resisting Normative Social Influence**

Additionally, if you conform to group norms most of the time, you earn *idiosyncrasy credits* that give you the right to deviate occasionally without serious consequences.

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