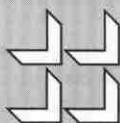


Replications and Refinements



Under this heading are brief reports of studies providing data that substantiate, disprove, or refine what we think we know. These Notes consist of a summary of the study's procedure and as many details about the results as space allows. Additional details concerning the results can be obtained by communicating directly with the author.

The Influence of Status on Pedestrians' Failure to Observe a Road-Safety Rule

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LEFKOWITZ, BLAKE, AND MOUTON (1955) found that some pedestrians were more likely not to obey the signals at a crosswalk when following the example of an offender of obviously high status (e.g., wearing a suit, a tie, and a hat) than when following that of an offender of obviously lower status (e.g., wearing dirty, heavy cotton trousers, and a faded tee shirt). The foregoing results may be related to those of McElroy and Morrow (1994): People tended to tolerate the physical nearness of high-status people and to distance themselves from low-status people. Moreover, such differences in behavior may explain why people assist high-status individuals more readily than they assist low-status individuals (Goodman & Gareis, 1993; Solomon, Solomon, & Maiorca, 1982). Whereas Lefkowitz et al. found that people's "follow-the-leader" attitudes toward a high-status person were more positive than toward a low-status person, they did not use the actual violation rate, which is almost nonexistent under controlled conditions (i.e., when there is no example of violation of the safety rules), to evaluate the behaviors of the passers-by

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toward low-status violators of safety rules. According to the results of comparison research conducted in Europe (Mermet, 1998), violations of safety rules were numerous in France. Therefore, the violation rates could be useful in studying the effects of the violator's apparent status on participants' tendency to violate a road-safety rule.

Insofar as the researchers mentioned in the preceding paragraph found that individuals tended to identify with high-status people and to avoid low-status people, we expected, by comparison with the control situation (i.e., with no offender as example), a higher rate of conformity to a high-status offender; conversely, we expected this behavior to be inhibited when the person breaking the rule was of lower status.

The experiment took place in a city that had more than 300,000 inhabitants as well as heavy automobile and pedestrian traffic. However, we chose only streets with a low flow of vehicles and few risks for the pedestrians. The participants were 2,883 pedestrians (683 in the high-status group, 734 in the low-status group, 709 in the intermediate-status group, and 757 in the control group), both men and women, waiting at a crosswalk with signals. We did not include children who were obviously under 12 years of age. A confederate (a 25-year-old man) stood a few meters away from the crosswalk until about 10 people came to wait for the signal to cross the street. The confederate (a) carried a briefcase and wore a businessman's attire (a suit and tie); (b) was unshaven, had greasy hair, and wore sloppy clothes (blue jeans, old shoes, a dirty tee shirt with holes); or (c) wore neutral clothes (heavy cotton trousers, sneakers, a clean tee shirt). According to his dress, the confederate embodied, respectively, a high-status person, a low-status person, or an intermediate-status person. The variable, thus, was the rate of people from the group of pedestrians who followed the confederate to the other side of the road against the signal. This rate corresponded to the ratio of the number of participants who followed the confederate across the road against the signal to the number of participants who remained at the crosswalk a few seconds after the confederate had crossed the road. We then compared the percentages of pedestrians who did not respect the waiting signal, according to the perceived status of the confederates.

Standing on opposite sides of the crossroad, two observers noted how many people had continued to wait on the sidewalk and how many had followed the confederate across the street while the signal for pedestrians was still red. One of the observers had an unobstructed view from a car parked about 20 m away; the second one was standing at the bus shelter on the sidewalk, so that he, too, could count the number of pedestrians. A comparison between both observers' rates of violation showed highly convergent evaluations, $r(262) = .96, p < .000$. According to the same observation conditions, we assessed the average percentages of pedestrians in the control group who did not respect the waiting signal, to determine the rate of violation when there was no model and to assess accurately the effect of the confederate's status on the participants' behaviors.

In the control group, 15.6% of the participants did not wait for the signal to cross the street. In the cases of high-, low-, and intermediate-status confederates, the rates of violation of the traffic signal were 54.5%, 9.3%, and 17.9%, respectively. We then compared those proportions. We used chi-square tests for 2×2 contingency tables to test whether the distribution of the participants' responses (i.e., following or not following the confederate) depended on the confederate's apparent status. In the situation of a high-status model, the number of participants who followed the confederate was higher than in the situation of an intermediate-status model, $\chi^2(1, N = 1392) = 202.12, p < .0001$, and in the situation of a low-status model, $\chi^2(1, N = 1417) = 337.63, p < .0001$. This effect seemed to be linked to the confederate's status because we observed a statistical difference with the control group, $\chi^2(1, N = 1440) = 241.75, p < .0001$. The participants more easily adopted the behavior of a high-status violator of the road-safety rule; conversely, when the confederate seemed to be of low status, there was a decrease in the participants' rate of

violation of the road-safety rule. As a matter of fact, the participants' rate of violation in the case of the low-status offender was statistically lower than in the case of the intermediate-status offender, $\chi^2(1, N = 1443) = 23.08, p < .0001$. Furthermore, in comparison with the control situation, the low-status confederate led to an inhibitory effect on the participants' offending behavior, $\chi^2(1, N = 1491) = 13.65, p < .0005$. Finally, there were no differences between the control group and the group with an intermediate-status confederate, $\chi^2(1, N = 1466) = 1.42, ns$. According to those identical rates, the behavior of the intermediate-status confederate had the same effect on the participants' rule violation as the behavior of any individual who was crossing the street.

The present results partly confirm those of Lefkowitz et al. (1955). We observed again that the number of offenses committed by pedestrians increased significantly when the confederate was dressed as a high-status person, rather than when he was wearing clothes suggesting a low or intermediate status. Nevertheless, unlike the results of the aforementioned authors, our results revealed that the participants tended to inhibit their "follow-the-leader" attitudes when the model was of low status. Meanwhile, Lefkowitz et al. found extremely low rates of violations committed by pedestrians in the control situation (almost 1%). It was, then, impossible for them to assess the effect of a low-status model because the rate of participants' offending behavior was too small, whereas such assessment was possible in the present study. The effects of activation and inhibition implied by the high-status and the low-status models, respectively, may stem from people's tendency to act differently according to a person's perceived status—that is, to approach high-status people and to avoid low-status people. McElroy and Morrow (1994) found that some participants were more likely to tolerate and to come physically nearer to a high-status stranger who addressed them, whereas they were more likely to avoid low-status people. McElroy and Morrow's participants would probably have sought to maintain contact with a high-status person and, therefore, would have followed the model across the street, whereas they would have sought to avoid contact with a low-status person and would have stayed on the sidewalk until the light changed.

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