**Conform or be Corrected: How Social Conformity & Corrective Consequences Motivate Behavior**

By Kiley Smith

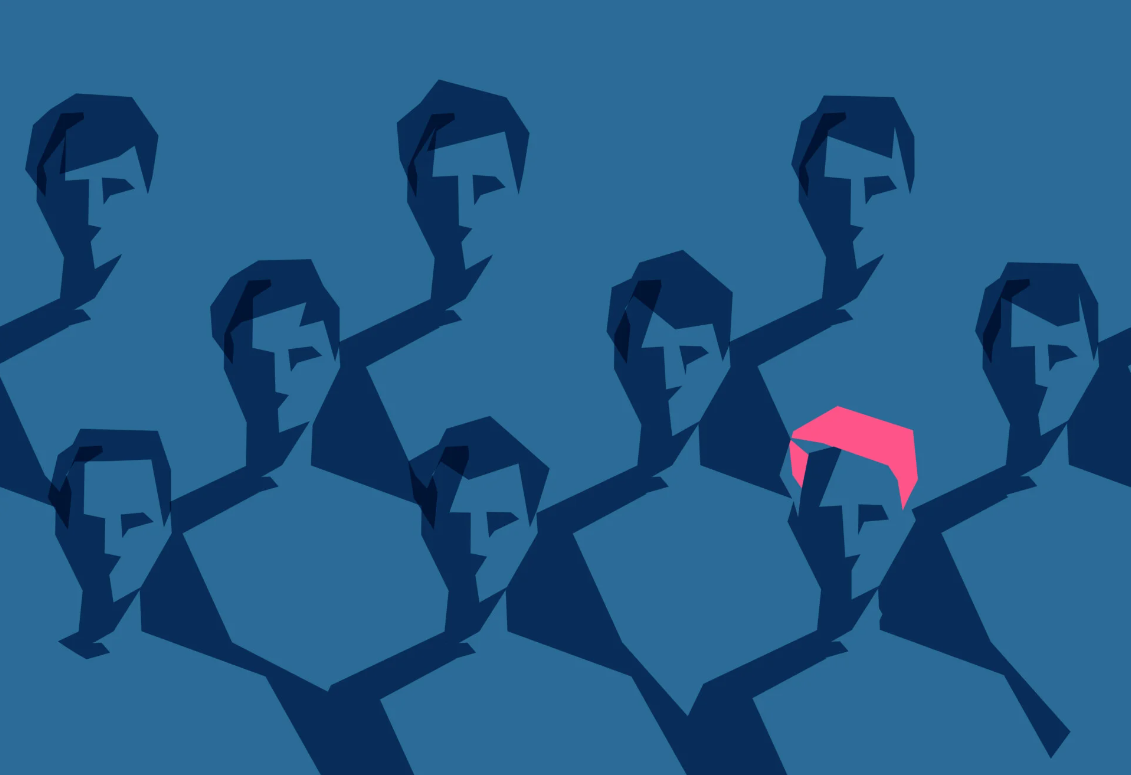
Delta State University, College of Education & Human Sciences, Department of Psychology

**Learning Objectives**

* Define social conformity and corrective consequences and their role in motivation.
* Identify factors that influence social conformity and types of corrective consequences.
* Analyze how social conformity and corrective consequences work together.
* Discuss the positive and negative consequences of social conformity and corrective consequences.

**Introduction**

**Social conformity** is where individuals change their behavior or attitudes to fit in with a group. **Corrective consequences** are the ways in which individuals are punished or rewarded. Corrective consequences can either reinforce or discourage social conformity. When individuals conform to social norms, they may be rewarded; however, if they deviate from social norms they may be punished. Depending on the severity of the consequence, its consistency, and the individual’s motivation and ability to change their behavior determines the effectiveness of corrective consequences. These consequences can be positive or negative. Examples of corrective consequences vary from the use of rewards in the classroom to reinforce positive behaviors to the use of punishments in the criminal justice system to deter criminal behavior. The relationship between social conformity and corrective consequences is complex and depends on individual, social, and cultural factors. However, understanding this relationship can help in creating more inclusive and supportive social environments and in promoting positive behavior change. **Motivation** in the context of social conformity and corrective consequences refers to the driving force behind a person’s behavior, which can be influenced by the desire to conform to social norms or to avoid corrective consequences.

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**Social Conformity**

Social conformity is the process by which individuals change their behavior, attitudes, or beliefs to match the majority or the norms of a particular social group. **Norms** are the unwritten rules or expectations that guide behavior within a particular social group or society. Examples of norms include gender roles, manners and etiquette, and fashion. Society often has expectations about these three things. For example, with how men and women should behave themselves (i.e., women are not to be as assertive as men). There are also many norms around politeness and respect; however, these can vary across cultures. They do include things like using “please” and “thank you,” not interrupting others while they are speaking, or holding the door open for someone. There are also many factors that influence social conformity: group size, unanimity, social identity, culture, and personality. The two types of social conformity are normative and informational.

**Normative conformity** individuals conform to a group’s norms or expectations to fit in, gain acceptance, or avoid rejection while **informational conformity** conform to the group’s behavior or beliefs because they perceive the group’s actions or ideas as correct. Normative conformity includes actions like laughing at a joke that isn’t funny, but doing so to fit in with a group of people. Informational conformity, on the other hand, would be like following a crowd of people to an exit during a fire drill – assuming they know the way out. In relation to social conformity, there is social influence. **Compliance** is a type of social influence where an individual changes their behavior in response to a direct request or command from someone in authority. **Obedience** is where the individual follows the directives of an authority figure without questioning or resisting. It is also important to know the **context** in which social influence occurs, as they influence the level of conformity.With social conformity, there is accountability. **Accountability** is the expectation that individuals will be held responsible for their adherence to social norms and standards.

There are many examples of social conformity in everyday life: social media, political beliefs, and peer pressure. Social media can be considered a form of social conformity because it often promotes the idea of fitting in with certain norms and expectations of a particular online community or social group. Political beliefs are also a form of social conformity because they are often shaped and influenced by the social and cultural context in which individuals live. Finally, there is peer pressure. **Peer pressure** may occur when friends or peers pressure individuals to conform to certain behaviors or beliefs, like drinking, to fit in or avoid social isolation.

There are positive and negative consequences of social conformity on behavioral motivation. Positive consequences of social conformity include **acceptance** and the **ability to learn**. **Acceptance** is the conforming of social norms can lead to acceptance and inclusion in a social group which can boost an individual's sense of belonging. Informational conformity can also lead individuals to adopt new behaviors or beliefs that are beneficial to their well-being or success, like a person who is attending a form dinner part for the time. They are unsure about the appropriate etiquette, so they may observe how other guests are behavior and adjust their own behavior to conform to the social norms of the group. Negative consequences include **risky behaviors** and **groupthink**. **Risky behaviors** can lead individuals to follow unhealthy habits that are prevalent in their social group like smoking or drinking alcohol. **Groupthink** on the other hand can occur when a group prioritizes conformity over critical thinking or creativity. Groupthink can occur in a multitude of situations, ranging from businesses to academics. For example, groupthink in academic research can occur when a research team prioritizes consensus over critical evaluation of evidence and data. This in turn leads to biases and errors.

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**Corrective Consequences**

**Corrective consequences** are the actions taken to address and correct behavior that is deemed inappropriate, unwanted, or harmful. They are designed to discourage individuals from repeating said behavior and encouraging them to engage in more desirable ones. There are two types of corrective consequences: positive and negative consequences. **Positive consequences** involve rewarding individuals for engaging in desirable behavior, like promotions. Examples extra break at recess for children who have finished their homework. **Negative consequences** on the other hand involve punishing individuals for engaging in undesirable behavior, like verbal reprimands or fines. A common negative consequence is fines for violating traffic laws or imprisonment for committing a crime.

**Behavior modification** is a systematic approach to changing or modifying behavior through the application of principles of learning and motivation.The role of corrective consequences in behavior modification can be explained by the principles of operant conditioning with punishment and reinforcement. **Punishment** refers to the application of a consequence following a behavior that decreases the likelihood of that behavior being repeated in the future. There are positive and negative punishments, just as there are positive and negative reinforcement. **Positive punishment** involves the presentation of an aversive stimulus to decrease the likelihood of a behavior occurring again in the future. These punishments are seen in schools, like when a student receives detention for not completing homework. **Negative punishment** is another type of corrective consequence that involves the removal of a positive stimulus. Someone that is driving under the influence will lose their driver’s license, hence taking away the positive stimulus of the driver’s license.

On the other hand, there is positive and negative reinforcement. **Positive reinforcement** Involves presenting a desirable stimulus, such as praise, a reward, or a token, following a behavior in order to increase the likelihood that the behavior will be repeated in the future.Children in schools receive desirable stimulus such as stickers or candy for completing a task. **Negative reinforcement** is the removal an aversive or unpleasant stimulus following a behavior in order to increase the likelihood that the behavior will be repeated in the future. With the example of school work, a student avoids extra homework by turning in am assignment on time.Again, police officers may issue traffic tickets to drivers who break traffic laws to discourage reckless driving and encourage safe driving habits. Parents may also put a child in a time-out to discourage negative behavior like hitting or throwing tantrums to encourage them to engage in more positive behavior. Or they will take take away privileges, such as TV time or video games, from a child who misbehaves to discourage their negative behavior.

There are many positive and negative consequences of corrective consequences on behavior motivation. Positively, there is the reinforcement of positive behaviors. **Positive corrective consequences** include praise and rewards – being presented following a behavior in order to increase the likelihood of that behavior being repeated in the future. It can also lead to improved performance and can encourage individuals to improve their performance, leading to increased productivity.  **Negative corrective consequences** like fines or demotions can create fear and anxiety, leading to decreased motivation and self-esteem. There are also unintended consequences like retaliation or resentment. This in turn can undermine the desired behavior change.

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**How Social Conformity and Corrective Consequences Interact**

When individuals conform to social norms, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that are deemed acceptable by the group and less likely to engage in behaviors that are considered unacceptable. Corrective consequences can help reinforce social conformity by providing feedback to individuals when they engage in behaviors that are not consistent with the group’s norms and expectations. **Feedback** is information individuals receive from others about their behavior and its conformity to social norms and standards. It can be either positive or negative, and can be conveyed through verbal or nonverbal cues, such as praise, criticism, facial expressions, or body language. Feedback can serve as a powerful motivator for behavior change by providing individuals with information about the consequences of their actions, and by reinforcing desirable behaviors and discouraging undesirable ones. The impact of social conformity and corrective consequences on behavior motivation are quite powerful, influencing behavior motivation by creating a sense of social pressure to conform to a group. There is also motivation to avoid corrective consequences or the fear of corrective consequences can be a powerful motivator to avoid negative behaviors. However, there can be a negative impact on intrinsic motivation. Social conformity and corrective consequences can also have a negative impact on intrinsic motivation due to being forced to conform or being threatened with corrective consequences.

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**How to Use Social Conformity and Corrective Consequences to Motivate Behavior**

There are many ethical considerations when using social conformity and corrective consequences. **Ethical considerations** are principles and guidelines that should be followed to ensure that these techniques are used in a responsible and respectful manner. This includes respecting individuals’ autonomy and right to make their own choices, avoiding the use of coercion or manipulation, and ensuring that any corrective consequences are proportionate to the behavior being modified. Ethical considerations include respect for autonomy as individuals have the right to make their own choices and decisions. When using social conformity and corrective consequences to influence behavior, it is important to consider individual’s autonomy and not use coercion or manipulation to force them to conform. There should be also an avoidance of harm or put them at risk of harm, i.e., physical punishment can be harmful. The best practices for using social conformity and corrective consequences to motivate behavior have specific criteria. The criteria for **best practices** are guidelines and strategies that should be followed to ensure that these techniques are used effectively and responsibly. It is important to provide positive feedback and reinforcement. It is also important to avoid punishment and negative reinforcement, as the use of negative reinforcement can be counterproductive and may lead to decreased motivation and resentment among individuals. Tips for avoiding negative consequences of social conformity and corrective consequences on behavior motivation include fostering open communication to ensure that individuals feel heard and valued. It is also important to provide choice and autonomy. Doing so can increase motivation and engagement. This can involve providing opportunities for individuals to make decisions and exercise their own judgement.

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**Conclusion**

In conclusion, social conformity and corrective consequences play significant roles in motivating behavior within social environments. Social conformity is a common phenomenon where individuals change their attitudes or behavior to fit in with a group, while corrective consequences are the rewards or punishments used to encourage or discourage conformity to social norms. Both positive and negative corrective consequences, such as rewards and punishments, can be effective in shaping behavior, depending on the context and individual factors. However, it is important to consider the potential long-term effects of these consequences, as they can also lead to resentment or rebellion if they are inconsistent or too severe. Understanding the complex relationship between social conformity and corrective consequences can help in creating more inclusive and supportive social environments, promoting positive behavior change, and preventing negative consequences such as groupthink or blind obedience.

**Discussion Questions**

1. What are some factors that can influence social conformity, and how do these factors impact behavior motivation?
2. What are some examples of conformity in everyday life, and how can these examples illustrate the positive and negative consequences of conformity on behavior motivation?
3. How can corrective consequences be used to modify behavior, and what are some examples of these consequences in everyday life?
4. What are some of the potential ethical considerations involved in using social conformity and corrective consequences, and how can these considerations be addressed to ensure responsible and effective use of these techniques?
5. What are some best practices for using social conformity and corrective consequences to motivate behavior, and how can these practices be integrated into everyday life to promote positive behavior change?

**Key Terms**

1. **Social conformity**
2. **Corrective consequences**
3. **Groupthink**
4. **Norms**
5. **Peer pressure**
6. **Compliance**
7. **Obedience**
8. **Consequences**
9. **Punishment**
10. **Reward**
11. **Motivation**
12. **Behavior modification**
13. **Positive reinforcement**
14. **Negative reinforcement**
15. **Positive punishment**
16. **Negative punishment**
17. **Accountability**
18. **Feedback**
19. **Ethical considerations**
20. **Best practices**

**References**

<https://openai.com/blog/chatgpt>

**SECTIONS**

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**Response to Reviewers**

In response to the reviewers, keywords were highlighted and given a clear definition throughout the entire chapter. Page numbers were also added. On page 15, discussion questions were also added.