

# It's Like Herding Chickens!

Social Psychology and the Understanding of  
Non-compliance with Pandemic Health-  
Directives.

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# Update on the Issue

U.S. Totals (Nov. 3):

- 9,235,299 cases
- 223,186 deaths\*

Recent surge in cases surpasses summer peak (COVID Tracking Project; [covidtracking.com](https://covidtracking.com))

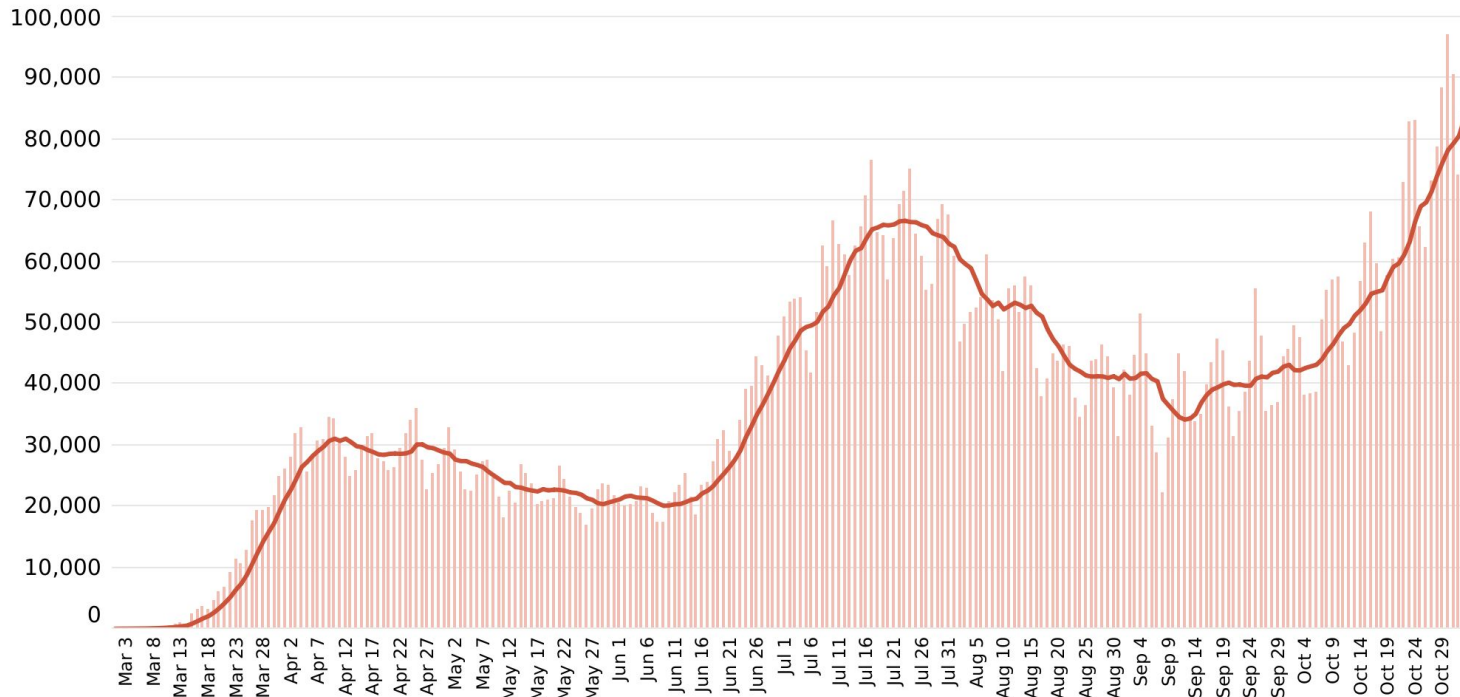
- 83,565 new cases per day

\*Tacoma population: 222,603

# Update on the Issue

## US DAILY CASES. 7-DAY AVERAGE LINE

Mar 1 to Nov 2



# Clear Recommendations



Public Service Announcement

Google



## **Wear a mask. Save lives.**

Wear a face cover

Wash your hands

Keep a safe distance

General public health information

[More info](#)

# Overview

Why do some people, especially Americans, fail to follow health directives?

We will apply lessons from **Social Psychology** to better understand (non)compliance:

- Social Influence
- Social Identity
- Attitudes & Behavior

# Social Psychology

The scientific study of how an individual's thoughts, feelings and behavior are affected by the real or imagined presence of others

For example...

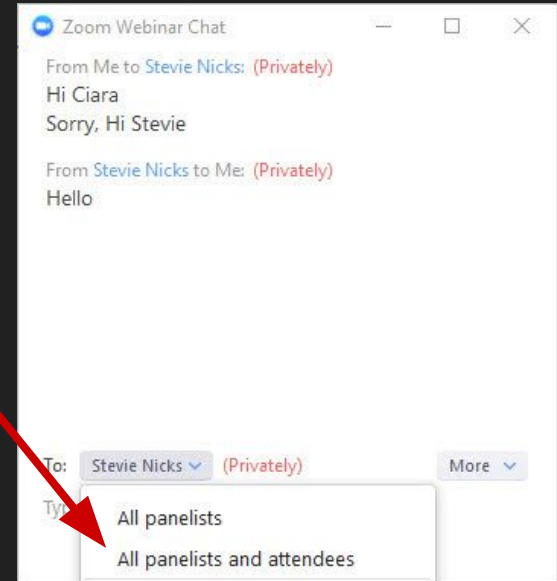
- Do people interact differently in a virtual meeting when they have their own image on the screen alongside others'?
- Are extroverts having a more difficult time with quarantine than introverts?
- Why did that person decide not to wear a mask, when everyone else has one on?

## IMPORTANT:

- Select “All panelists and attendees”
- Type your answer but DON'T HIT ENTER YET

## Scenario:

You arrive at your local grocery store on a fairly busy afternoon. You notice that everyone is wearing a mask except for one person who walks confidently through the produce section without a mask. Why are they not complying?



# Social Influence

## Psychological Reactance

- When people feel their freedom to do something is being limited, it can arouse a desire to do the behavior



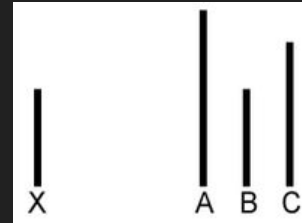
*Missourian 9/11/20*



# Social Influence

## Informational Social Influence

- Conform with group because they know the *right* thing to do



## Normative Social Influence

- Conform with group to fit in or avoid ridicule

# What are most people doing?



Fayetteville, NC 9/19/2020



Wilmington, DE 8/12/2020



The New York Times

# A Detailed Map of Who Is Wearing Masks in the U.S.

By Josh Katz, Margot Sanger-Katz and Kevin Quealy July 17, 2020

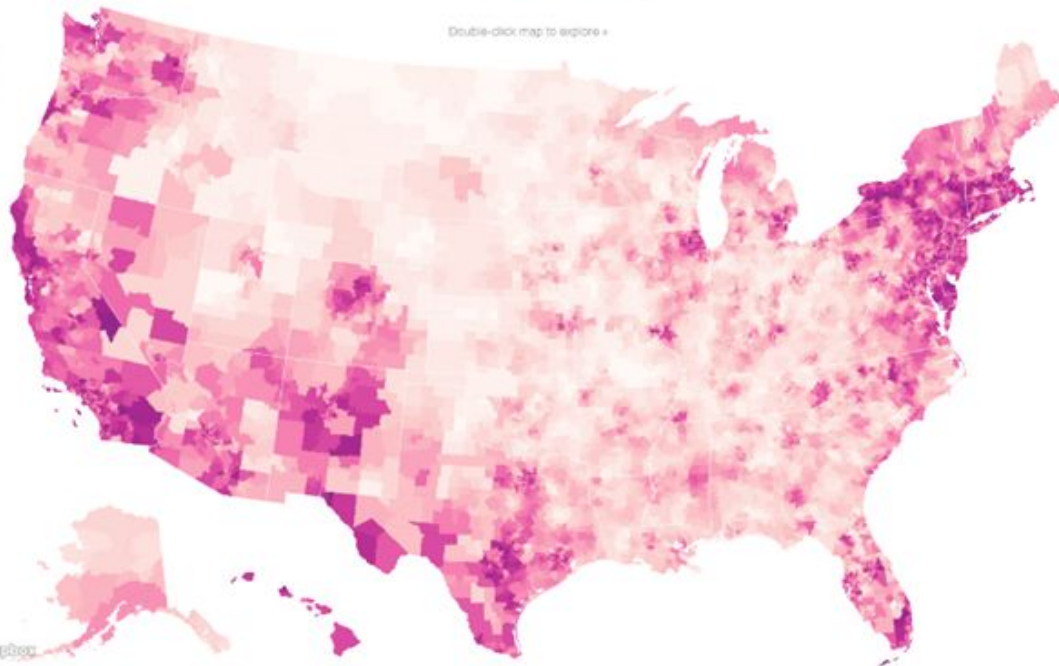
Chance all five people are wearing masks  
in five random encounters

0% 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

Double-click map to explore »



© mapbox



We wear masks to  
protect you.



Thank you for wearing a  
mask to protect us.

**NOTICE**

**FACE MASKS  
REQUIRED**



ALL EMPLOYEES AND VISITORS  
MUST WEAR A FACE MASK OR  
A PROTECTIVE FACE COVERING

We wear masks here.



Tampa Bay

**S T R O N G**



Social  
distance



Take the test



Routinely  
wash hands



Only go out  
if you feel well



Notify your doctor  
if you feel sick



Going out?  
Wear a mask

Wear Face MASK upon  
Entering



THANKS FOR PRACTICING  
**SOCIAL  
DISTANCING**

**NO MASK ON  
YOUR FACE**

**YOU BIG  
DISGRACE**

**SPREADING  
YOUR  
GERMS ALL  
OVER THE  
PLACE**



You can choose not to  
wear a mask.  
Then you must also re-  
move all your clothes  
to enter.

It's all or nothing. It's about choices.

Thank you,  
The Management MeWow



Thank you  
for practicing  
social distancing.



**NO MASK**



**NO ENTRY**



**Y'ALL WEAR  
A MASK.  
IT'S REQUIRED**

# Social Influence

## Descriptive Norms

- What do most people do?



## Injunctive Norms

- What should people do?





# Social Identity

## Social Identity Theory

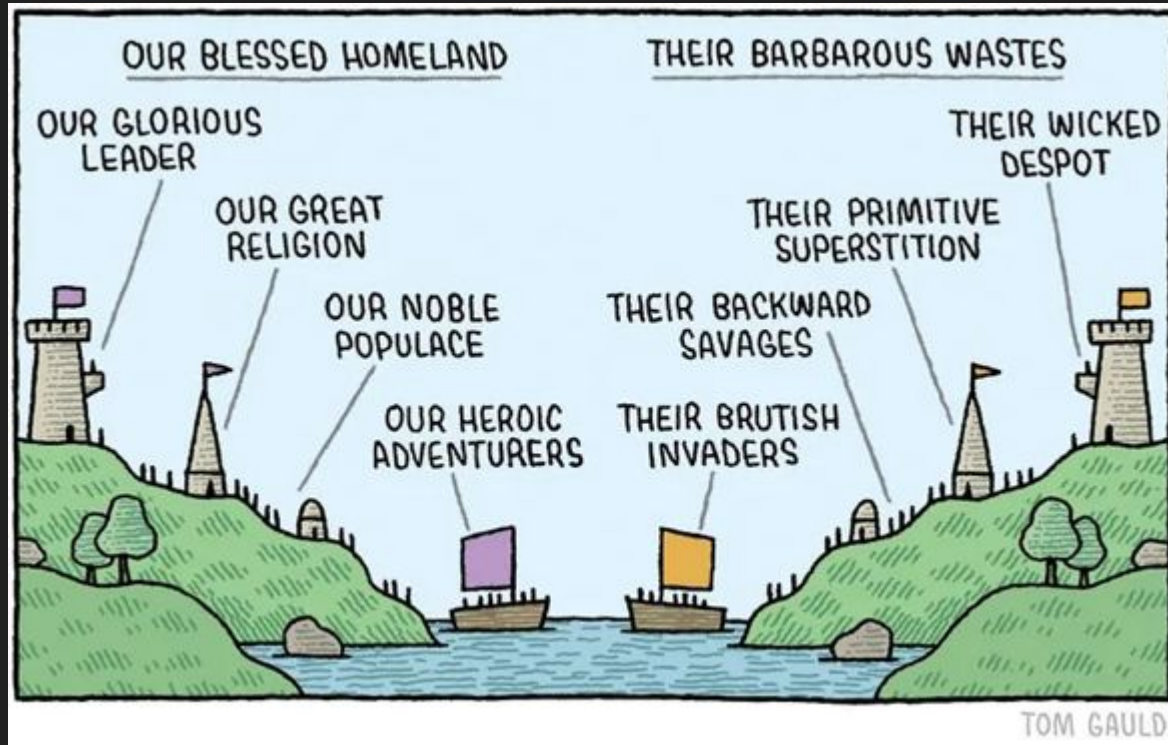
- Personal identity is strongly shaped by the group(s) to which one belongs
- Group memberships serve as sense of pride, self-esteem, and provide a sense of belonging and understanding (basic psychological needs)

# Social Identity

## Social Identity Theory

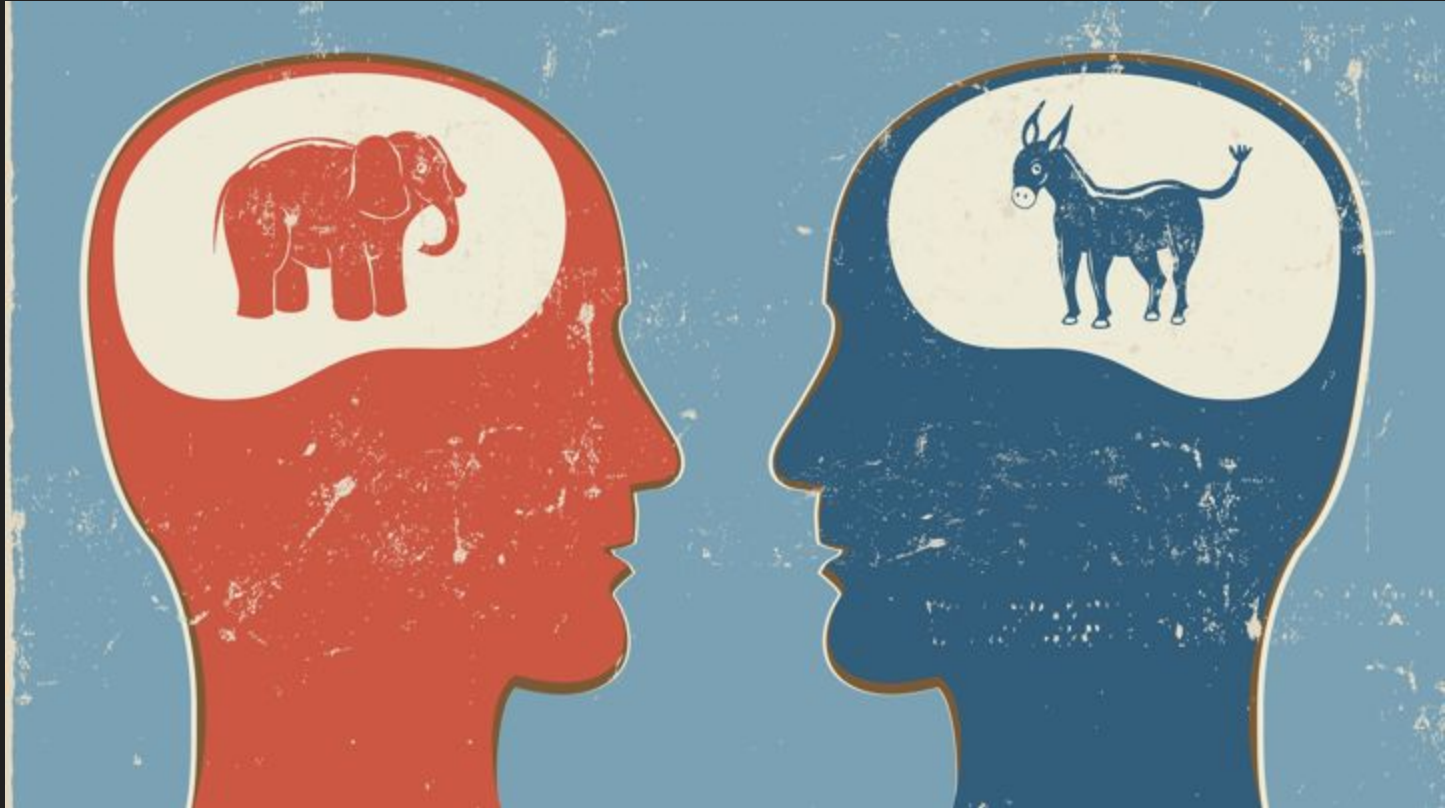
- Categorization of social groups leads to stereotyping of group members
- Stereotypes:
  - Serve as cognitive shortcuts (heuristics) for evaluating group members
  - Exaggerate differences between groups
  - Exaggerate similarities of members within a group
- Leads to distinction of ingroup vs. outgroup (us vs. them)

# Social Identity





# Social Identity & Politics



# Social Identity

How did public health behaviors become politicized?

- Partisans interpret the same information differently depending on its (un)favorability toward their group
  - Republicans may believe that risk and death toll are inflated as a way to discredit Trump leading up to election
- People behave in ways to promote/enhance social identity
  - Refusal to wear a mask associate with toughness, masculinity, rebellion against government overreach

# Attitudes and Behavior

## Inconsistency

Awareness of inconsistency between attitudes and/or behaviors

## Cognitive Dissonance

An uncomfortable psychological state that we are motivated to reduce

## Change in Behaviors/Attitudes

Changing behaviors or justifying attitudes to reduce the feeling of dissonance

# Conclusion

Social Psychology can help us understand (non)compliance among individuals.

How can we use this knowledge to effect positive outcomes?

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How can we use this knowledge to effect positive outcomes?

## Social Influence

- Messaging matters: content and source
  - Injunctive norms
  - Descriptive norms



# Conclusion

Social Psychology can help us understand (non)compliance among individuals.

How can we use this knowledge to effect positive outcomes?

## Social Identity

- Expanding ingroup
- Overarching identities
- Shared goals/outcomes



# Conclusion

Social Psychology can help us understand (non)compliance among individuals.

How can we use this knowledge to effect positive outcomes?

## **Attitudes & Behavior**

- Normalize consistent behaviors to prevent dissonance
- Emphasize shared values and desired outcomes

Questions?

