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**“BUT, EVERYONE ELSE IS DOING IT!”
RESEARCH ON NORMATIVE BEHAVIORS PUBLISHED
IN *PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY BULLETIN***

Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore, and Washington DC (July 31, 2008) —“But everyone else is doing it!” Those words are usually met with the withering response of, “If everyone else was jumping off a bridge, would you do that too?” Recent research published by SAGE in the July issue of *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* suggests that indeed, most of us *would* be more likely to jump off a bridge if we thought everyone else was doing it. However, we probably wouldn’t recognize that as the reason for our behavior.

In a series of studies, the article’s researchers randomly distributed flyers throughout a neighborhood, giving different reasons to conserve electricity, such as saving money and saving resources. Other flyers provided “normative” information, reporting the percentage of neighbors who were conserving. When later interviewing the residents, the researchers found that those who received the normative messages reported that they weren’t very motivated by the message. Their meters told another story: residents who received the normative information flyers used the least power during the month the study was conducted.

“The results demonstrate how people’s theories about how the kinds of messages that persuade them may differ markedly from what persuades them to actually change their behavior,” write the authors. “The study showed that people underestimate the persuasive powers of normative messages and aren’t accurate at estimating the effectiveness of other kinds of appeals either.”

The article, “Normative Social Influence is Underdetected,” written by Jessica M. Nolan (University of Arkansas), P. Wesley Schultz (California State University, San Marcos), Robert B. Cialdini (Arizona State University), Noah Goldstein (University of Chicago), and Vldas Griskevicius (University of Minnesota), is available at no charge for a limited time at <http://psp.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/34/7/913>.

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