1917 — **John Dewey** publishes *The Need for Social Psychology*, describing man as a **"social animal."**

1935 — **Muzafer Sherif** carries out the "autokinetic effect" experiments, demonstrating the tendency for groups to conform.

1940s — Kurt Lewin establishes his **field theory**, claiming that behavior is determined by the life space (totality) of a person's situation.

1951 — Solomon Asch's **conformity experiments** suggest that people will override their own judgement in order to conform.

1954 — Gordon Allport publishes *On the Nature of Prejudice*, which establishes the theoretical foundations for **the study of prejudice**.

1959 — Erving Goffman publishes *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, which claims that **social interaction is a performance**.

1961 — Serge Moscovici introduces the concept of **social representations**.

1963 — Stanley Milgram's *Behavioral Study of Obedience* illustrates that people will ignore their own moral values to **obey authority**.

As psychology became established as a scientific discipline, its scope was at first limited to the examination of the mind and its workings, before broadening to include the study of behavior. For much of the first half of the 20th century, this meant the emphasis was very much on a study of the mind and behavior of individuals and their responses to their environment, though it became increasing clear to some psychologists that "the environment" includes other people.

The field of social psychology emerged in the 1930s, when psychologists began to explore the interactions of individuals within groups and society as a whole. They examined the effect of social organizations on the individual, and the way that social structures are influenced by the psychology of their individual members. Social psychologists, as they were called, also studied the relationships between individuals within these groups and between different groups. This introduced a new set of topics to psychology, including group dynamics, attitudes, and prejudice, as well as social conflict, conformity, obedience, and social change.

Social environment

Among the first to make a systematic study of the psychology of social groups was German–American Kurt Lewin, considered the "father of social psychology." Lewin took a fresh look at the dominant behaviorist approach, examining how behavior results from the interaction between the individual and his environment, as well as the nature of that environment. In his studies of small groups, he laid the foundations for later examinations of group dynamics and how groups and their members bring about change.

Behaviorism fell out of favor after World War II, and Lewin's ideas about the effect of the social environment provided an alternative that was enthusiastically taken up by the next generation. The concept of "attribution"—the way we see and interpret the behavior of others—became an area of specific research, and from that came theories of conformity and cultural norms such as those of Solomon Asch. Erving Goffman's best-known theory—that we act out certain behaviors to suit the impression we want to give

1965 — William Glasser publishes *Reality Therapy*, which forms the basis of his later **Choice Theory**.

1968 — Robert Zajonc conducts experiments on the **mere exposure effect**.

1971 — Elliot Aronson develops the **"jigsaw classroom"** technique to reduce ethnic rivalry and encourage cooperation in newly desegregated classrooms.

1971 — Philip Zimbardo runs the **Stanford Prison Experiment**.

1972 — Janet Taylor Spence and Robert Helmreich devise the **Attitudes toward Women Scale** (AWS).

1977 — Roger Brown and James Kulik publish *Flashbulb Memories*, about our special **biological memory mechanism**.

1978 — Melvin Lerner suggests his **just world theory**, which claims that many of us tend to believe that people get what they deserve.

1994 — Ignacio Martín-Baró calls for **"Liberation Psychology,"** for poor and war-torn countries.

to others—also came out of this new emphasis on the importance of social interaction.

Research in the 1960s shed light on the darker aspects of behavior; Melvin Lerner showed how victims are sometimes blamed for what happens to them, and Elliot Aronson explained that apparently aberrant behavior could be the result of circumstances rather than insanity. More controversially, especially at a time when the atrocities of World War II were still fresh in people's minds, experiments by Stanley Milgram and Philip Zimbardo showed just how far the need to obey and conform affects our behavior.

Applying psychology

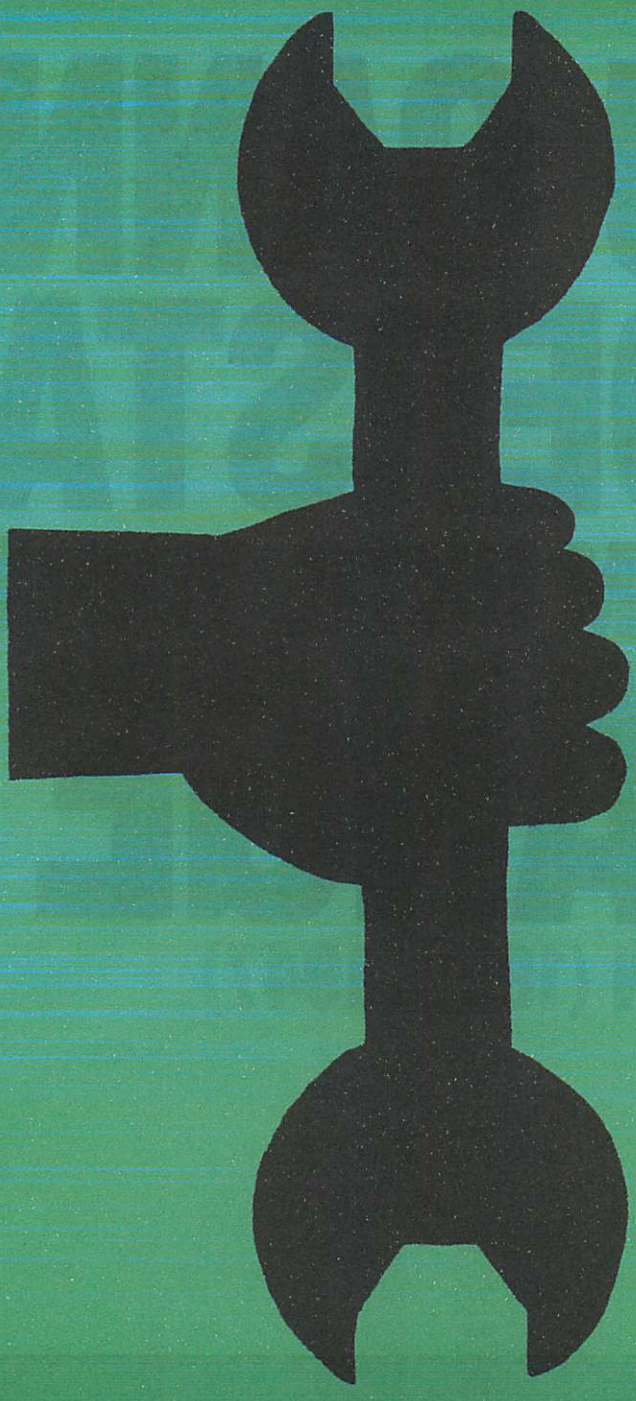
The advent of cognitive psychology brought a new influence on social psychology. The effects of cognitive processes such as memory and emotion were highlighted by Roger Brown and Robert Zajonc, and these findings were exploited widely by the mass media and advertising, which began to play an increasingly important role in modern society. Mass media and advertising in turn had a growing effect on social structures, prompting theories of social constructivism by psychologists such as Serge Moscovici.

As a result, social psychology has rapidly become more applicable to many different situations. It has influenced other areas of psychology—in particular psychotherapy, through William Glasser's "reality therapy." It has also impacted on other disciplines, including sociology, anthropology, and even politics and economics.

The 1960s saw the rise of the civil rights movement and feminism, both of which challenged the status quo. Issues surrounding prejudice, cultural norms, and beliefs came to the fore, and the work of social psychologists such as Janet Taylor Spence did much to alter attitudes toward women, while others used Lewin's process of social transformation to bring about organizational changes. Theories and models pioneered by social psychologists are now used by business, industry, and all kinds of social organizations, and more recently have been adopted as a means of achieving social and political reform in societies suffering from oppression, most notably in the "Liberation Psychology" espoused by Ignacio Martín-Baró. ■

YOU CANNOT UNDERSTAND A SYSTEM UNTIL YOU TRY TO CHANGE IT

KURT LEWIN (1890–1947)



IN CONTEXT

APPROACH
Field theory

BEFORE
Early 1900s Sigmund Freud and other psychotherapists argue that human behavior is a result of past experience.

1910s Wolfgang Köhler, among other Gestalt psychologists, argues that people must be understood holistically, according to all of their elements and their interactions with the surrounding environment.

AFTER
1958 In *The Dynamics of Planned Change*, Ronald Lippitt, Jeanne Watson, and Bruce Westley create a seven-step change theory that focuses on the role of the change agent rather than on the evolution of change itself.

The behaviorists believed that behavior is dictated by the environment alone, but in the 1920s Kurt Lewin made the claim that behavior is a result of both the individual and the environment. His revolutionary ideas developed and evolved into the study of group dynamics that is invaluable to organizations today.

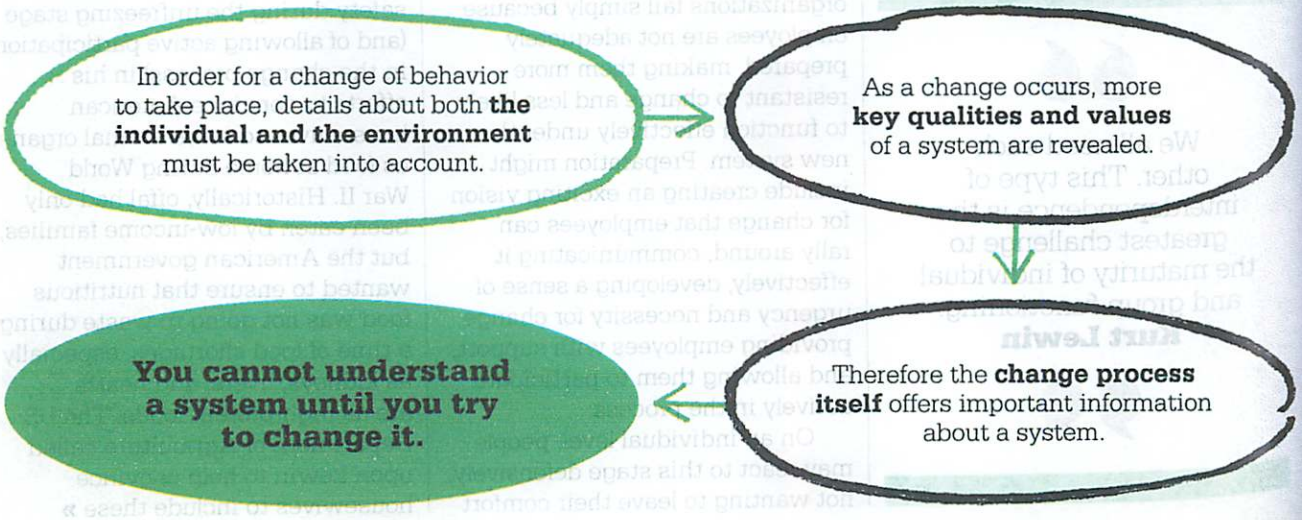
In his investigation of human behavior, Lewin developed field theory, which explores the forces and factors that influence any given situation. Lewin's "field" refers to the psychological environment of the individual or the collective group at a particular point in time, and he identified two opposing forces present in any given field: helpful forces, which drive people toward achieving their goals, and hindering forces, which inhibit movement toward these goals.

Lewin's change model

Field theory provided the basis for Lewin's model of change, which offers an invaluable guide for successful transformation, both for individuals and organizations. The model shows that in order to carry out the process of change successfully, a person or organization leader must take into account the various influences at play both within the minds of individuals and within their environment.

> A person who has learned to see how much his own fate depends upon the fate of his entire group will be eager to take over a fair share of responsibility for its welfare.
> **Kurt Lewin**

In explaining his change model, Lewin emphasizes that the entire situation, including all the relevant personal and environmental details, must be taken into account, as focusing on isolated facts can lead to a skewed perception of the circumstances. Not only must you have a thorough and holistic



See also: Sigmund Freud 92–99 ▪ Wolfgang Köhler 160–61 ▪ Leon Festinger 166–67 ▪ Max Wertheimer 335 ▪ Elton Mayo 335

Successful organizational change is engendered by making a unique diagnosis of the people and situational forces involved, and understanding the interplay between them.

understanding of a situation in order to change it, but that understanding actually deepens throughout the change process, and therefore "you cannot understand a system until you try to change it."

Lewin's model describes a three-step process for achieving personal or organizational transformation. The first stage—which he called "unfreezing"—involves recognizing that change is necessary, and dismantling old beliefs and practices. Change occurs in the second stage, and is often accompanied by confusion and distress as the old mindset or system breaks down. The third and final stage, "freezing," occurs when a new mindset is crystallized and there is an accompanying sense of comfort and stability within the new framework. The process is difficult because it involves painful unlearning, difficult relearning, and the restructuring of thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and perceptions.

> We all need each other. This type of interdependence is the greatest challenge to the maturity of individual and group functioning.
> **Kurt Lewin**

Unfreezing beliefs

The unfreezing stage is perhaps the most complex stage of the process, as people are naturally inclined to resist changes to their established mindsets and routines. It requires careful preparation; many change efforts within organizations fail simply because employees are not adequately prepared, making them more resistant to change and less likely to function effectively under the new system. Preparation might include creating an exciting vision for change that employees can rally around, communicating it effectively, developing a sense of urgency and necessity for change, providing employees with support, and allowing them to participate actively in the process.

On an individual level, people may react to this stage defensively, not wanting to leave their comfort zone and undergo the challenge of learning new skills or accepting a new set of beliefs. This natural resistance can be overcome if the individual is helped to accept that the change is necessary, valid, and will lead to the best outcome, and if support is given to engender a feeling of psychological safety.

Lewin demonstrated the positive effect of creating an environment of psychological safety during the unfreezing stage (and of allowing active participation in the change process) in his efforts to convince American housewives to serve animal organs as food at home during World War II. Historically, offal had only been eaten by low-income families, but the American government wanted to ensure that nutritious food was not going to waste during a time of food shortages, especially as kidneys, livers, and hearts are all high-protein foods. The US Department of Agriculture called upon Lewin to help convince housewives to include these »

> Learning is more effective when it is an active rather than a passive process.
> **Kurt Lewin**

meats in their family meals. During interviews with housewives, Lewin realized that there were both helpful and hindering forces at play. The helpful forces, or incentives, toward changing the housewives' view of organ meat was its high nutritional value. The hindering forces, or barriers, to change centered around the women's view that the meat was inappropriate for them and their families, and to a lesser degree, that it would not taste good.

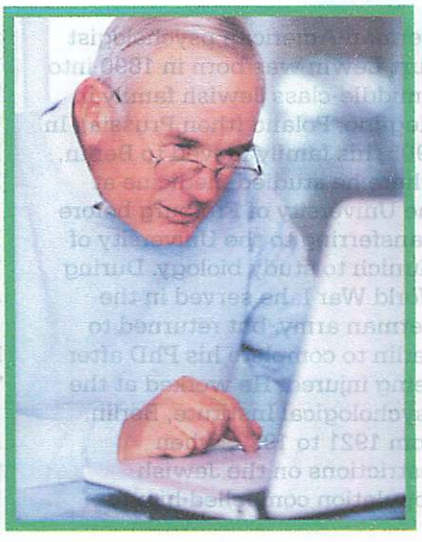
Lewin set up a study using two groups of housewives to explore the best ways of initiating change. The first group was told repeatedly that eating offal was beneficial for them, while the other group took part in a small group discussion focusing on how the food shortage problem could be eased if women like themselves could be convinced to take part in a program of using secondary cuts of meat such as livers, kidneys, and hearts. When around one-third of the women who had participated in the discussion group later served offal for dinner, Lewin concluded that increasing the level of people's involvement also increases the likelihood of changing their attitudes and behaviors. Lecturing to the first group had proved ineffective, but in the discussion group he had created an environment in which women felt psychologically safe enough to express their concerns and opinions. Through exploring their beliefs as well as the realities of the food shortages, he helped them change their opinions about which meats were edible and guided them toward a new belief: that offal is acceptable to buy and serve at home.

Making the change

During Lewin's second stage—the actual change process—people are confronted with the daunting and confusing task of implementing a new system. They must give up familiar routines and practices and master new skills (which itself can arouse feelings of uncertainty or a fear of failure). In an organization, the new system will be defined by the leadership, and often relates to technology, structure, procedures, or culture. It is important at this stage to provide sufficient support for employees and ensure the elimination of obstacles.

At the level of personal change, people cannot be given a new belief system, but must find and accept one for themselves. When an old belief has been proven wrong or ineffective, we are naturally inclined to replace the old value system with a new one, filling the uncomfortable void left by the unfreezing process. We do this in a combination of ways: relying on our instinctive feelings, studying role models, and looking more generally to the vast array of information available. We hope in this way to expose ourselves to a new piece of information that will solve the problem. Once this insight is achieved, we have accepted and established a new mindset.

In the case of the American housewives during World War II, Lewin provided the women with new information by educating them about the good taste and nutritional value of offal (thereby replacing their old belief that it was an inferior meat), and convincing them that given the reality of wartime food shortages, there was absolutely no shame in serving it to their families (thereby replacing their pre-wartime belief that they would be viewed as social inferiors for eating it).



The freezing stage

After change has been implemented within an organization, it must become part of the company's culture (or "frozen") in order for it to be successful in the long term. The new thought processes, practices, and behaviors adopted during the transition must become routine. Management can help to ensure changes become more firmly established by publicizing the ways in which change has benefited the company, and by nurturing positive

Learning to use new technologies in place of old ones is made easier by an increase in driving forces—such as the ability to contact friends and family worldwide, instantly and inexpensively.

During World War II, housewives were encouraged to change many of their beliefs, from the types of food and clothing that were acceptable to their capability to do "men's jobs."

feelings toward the change among employees, perhaps by delivering rewards for implementing the new skills or processes. For example, in the 1990s, Continental Airlines was forced to file for bankruptcy. In order to stay in business, the management implemented a major change: they shifted the company focus from saving costs to putting out a quality product that met high customer standards. They decided to reward employees for adopting the new policies and practices (to ensure compliance to the new priorities) by offering them a $65 bonus if the US Department of Transportation rated the company among the top five airlines. The use of Lewin's change model marked Continental's evolution from being the poorest-performing airline to being named Airline of the Year.

At the individual level, the freezing stage marks a time when new beliefs and practices are tested through trial and error; this either reinforces the changes or starts a new change cycle. For example, after a week of serving offal to her family, a wartime housewife might assess whether her family seems to enjoy the meat, whether they seem healthy, and whether other families seem to be judging her positively or negatively based on her meal choices. If the answers to these questions are positive, she will continue to serve offal at dinnertime. If, however, her children do not appear to be as healthy as they were when eating chicken or steak, or if other women are criticizing her choice of meat, she may decide to abandon offal and look for other ways to feed her family, starting the unfreezing and change processes all over again.

Lewin's pioneering experimental work into social systems has led him to be widely recognized as the founder of social psychology. He was the first psychologist to study "group dynamics" and organizational development in a methodical way. He applied rigorous social science to effect useful social transformation, and his work has been influential across the fields of experimental and social psychology. ■

> "There is nothing so practical as a good theory."
> **Kurt Lewin**

Kurt Lewin

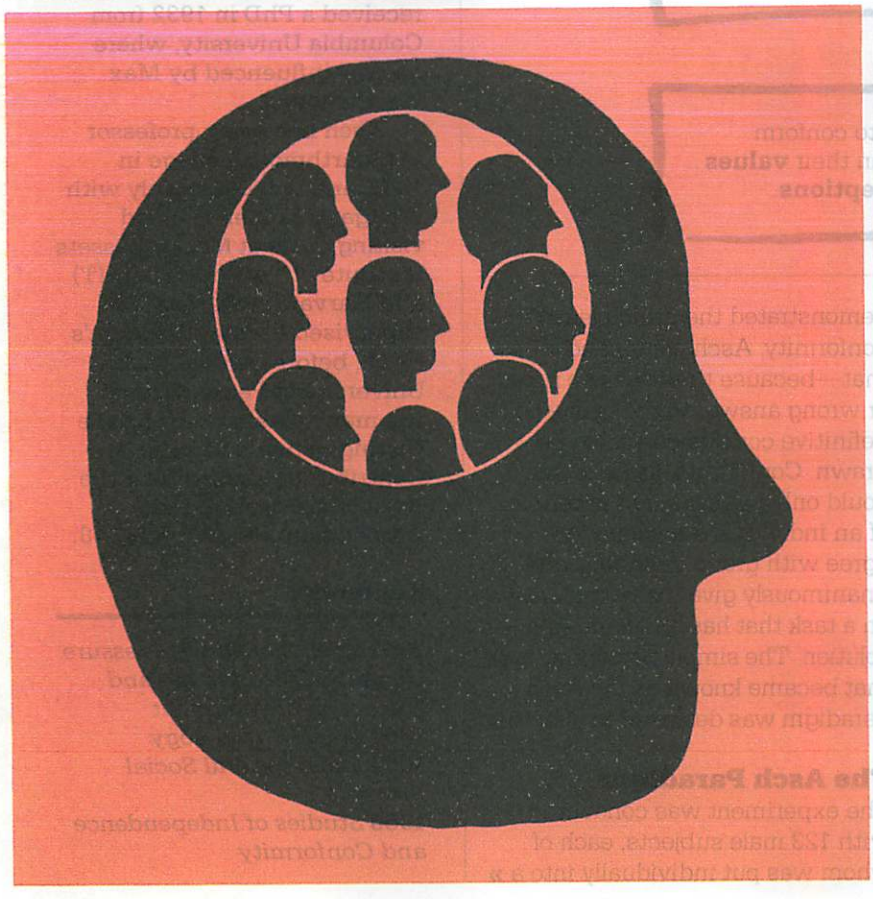
German-American psychologist Kurt Lewin was born in 1890 into a middle-class Jewish family in Mogilno, Poland (then Prussia). In 1905, his family moved to Berlin, where he studied medicine at the University of Freiburg before transferring to the University of Munich to study biology. During World War I, he served in the German army, but returned to Berlin to complete his PhD after being injured. He worked at the Psychological Institute, Berlin, from 1921 to 1933, when restrictions on the Jewish population compelled him to resign and seek refuge in the US. He began working at Cornell University, then moved to the University of Iowa where he became a professor. In 1944, he became director of the Center for Group Dynamics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, but died of a heart attack just three years later.

Key works

1935 *A Dynamic Theory of Personality*
1948 *Resolving Social Conflicts*
1951 *Field Theory in Social*

HOW STRONG IS THE URGE TOWARD SOCIAL CONFORMITY?

SOLOMON ASCH (1907–1996)



IN CONTEXT

APPROACH
Conformism

BEFORE
1880s Hippolyte Bernheim, a French physician, uses hypnosis to demonstrate the concept of "suggestibility."

1935 Muzafer Sherif's conformism experiment leads Asch to develop the Asch Paradigm.

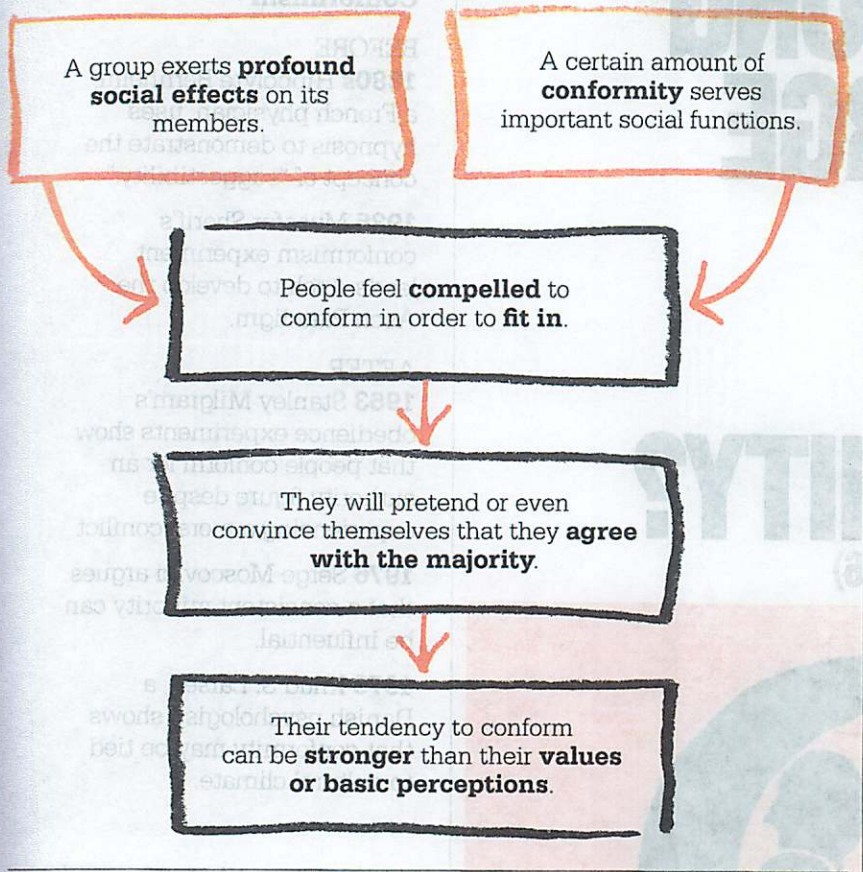
AFTER
1963 Stanley Milgram's obedience experiments show that people conform for an authority figure despite experiencing a moral conflict.

1976 Serge Moscovici argues that a consistent minority can be influential.

1979 Knud S. Larsen, a Danish psychologist, shows that conformity may be tied to cultural climate.

Social psychologist Solomon Asch challenged our idea of ourselves as autonomous beings when he devised an experiment to demonstrate our urge to conform. His famous experiment showed that when people are confronted with a majority opinion, the tendency to conform may be stronger than their commitment to what they perceive to be true. He detailed his findings in his 1955 paper *Opinions and Social Pressure*, which also discusses the social influences that shape a person's beliefs, judgments, and practices. Asch wanted to investigate the effects of group pressure on individual decision-making, and

See also: Serge Moscovici 238–39 ▪ Stanley Milgram 246–53 ▪ Philip Zimbardo 254–55 ▪ Max Wertheimer 335 ▪ Muzafer Sherif 337



how and to what extent people's attitudes were influenced by social forces around them.

Turkish psychologist Muzafer Sherif set out to answer similar questions in 1935, using a visual illusion called the autokinetic effect, whereby a stationary spot of light seen in a dark room appears to move. He told the subjects of his study that he was going to move the light and asked them how far they thought it had shifted. Tested in groups, the participants' estimates converged into a group norm, revealing that they used others' estimates as a frame of reference in an ambiguous situation. Although Sherif believed that he had demonstrated the principles of conformity, Asch contended that—because there was no right or wrong answer to the task—no definitive conclusions could be drawn. Conformity, he believed, could only be measured in terms of an individual's tendency to agree with group members who unanimously give the wrong answer on a task that has an unambiguous solution. The simple perceptual task that became known as the Asch Paradigm was designed to offer this.

The Asch Paradigm

The experiment was conducted with 123 male subjects, each of whom was put individually into a »

Solomon Asch

Solomon Elliott Asch was a pioneer in the field of social psychology. He was born into a Jewish family in Warsaw (then part of the Russian Empire) in 1907. At the age of 13 he emigrated to the US and studied psychology. He received a PhD in 1932 from Columbia University, where he was influenced by Max Wertheimer.

Asch became a professor at Swarthmore College in 1947, and worked closely with Wolfgang Köhler. He held visiting posts at Massachussets Institute of Technology (MIT) and Harvard, where he supervised Stanley Milgram's Ph.D., before moving to the University of Pennsylvania. His many awards include the Distinguished Scientific Contribution Award from the American Psychological Association. He died aged 88.

Key works

1951 *Effects of Group Pressure Upon the Modification and Distortion of Judgment*
1952 *Social Psychology*
1955 *Opinions and Social Pressure*
1956 *Studies of Independence and Conformity*

group of five to seven "confederates" (people who were aware of the real aims of the experiment but were introduced as fellow participants). The group was shown one card with a line on it, followed by another card with three lines labeled A, B, and C, and asked which one of those three lines was the same length as the line on the first card.

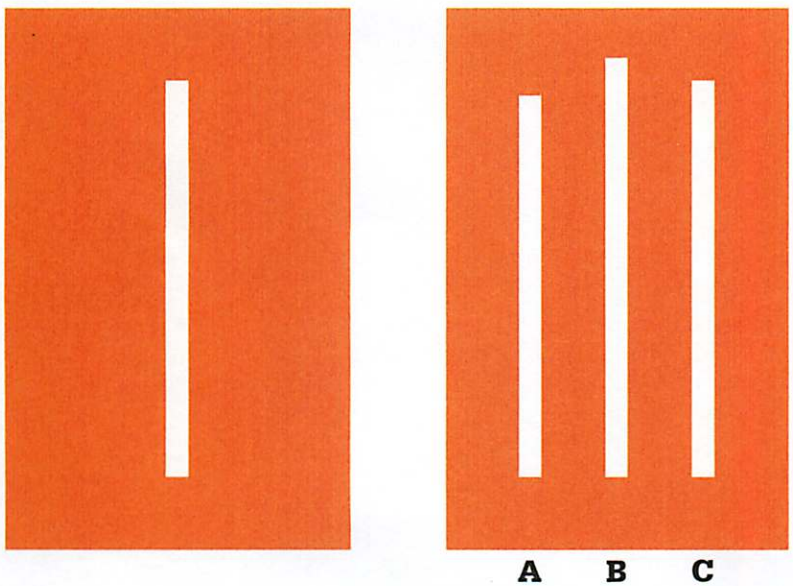
The room was always organized so that the subject would give either the last or the penultimate answer. Over the course of 18 trials, confederates were instructed to provide the correct answers for the first six, but then to give identical but incorrect answers for another 12. This was to test whether or not the subject would answer correctly or whether he would match his response to that of the confederates when all gave the same—incorrect—answer.

Initially, Asch thought that only a few of the subjects would comply with the confederates' answers. After all, the task was simple and the answers obvious; during the pilot study in which there was no pressure to yield to an erroneous group, only three errors were made out of 720 total trials. The results of the actual study were surprising. When surrounded by a group of people all giving the same incorrect answer, subjects gave incorrect answers on almost a third (32 percent) of the questions; 75 percent of them provided an incorrect response for at least one question. One person complied with the group giving a wrong answer on 11 out of 12 trials. Because the task was both simple and unambiguous, these figures indicate a high degree of conformity by the subjects. However, not a single participant conformed on all critical trials, and 13 of the 50 participants (26 percent) never conformed.

> All the yielding subjects underestimated the frequency with which they conformed.
> **Solomon Asch**

The results proved that the subjects themselves were highly consistent. Those who broke away from the group opinion and provided an independent answer did not succumb to the majority even over many trials, while those who chose to comply with the majority seemed unable to break this pattern.

In the Asch Paradigm experiment, participants were given a visual test. They had to decide which of the three lines on the second card was the same length as the one on the first card. Each question was called a "trial" and there were 18 trials in all.



Explanations

To get a deeper understanding of his results, Asch interviewed his subjects to find out why they offered incorrect answers. Some said they wanted to go along with what they believed to be the experimenter's wishes and avoid upsetting the overall experiment. A few actually wondered if they were perhaps suffering from eye strain or were seated at a misleading angle. Some denied that they were aware of having given incorrect answers. Eventually, some admitted to knowing their answers were incorrect, adding that they did not want to stand out or appear different and foolish: they wanted to fit in.

Asch also spoke to the subjects who had maintained correct and independent responses, and found that they had not been unresponsive to the majority, but had been able to recover from the doubt that they felt in order to give an honest account of what they saw.

Asch performed variations on the experiment to test what difference the size of the majority group made to levels of conformity. He found that just one confederate had virtually no influence on the subject's conformity, two had only a small influence, but three or more encouraged a relatively stable tendency to conform. Unanimity in the confederates' responses was a more powerful factor; but even if only one confederate offered an alternative answer, the subjects were much more likely to provide an independent (and correct) response. This finding highlights the power of even a very small dissenting minority. Furthermore, Asch discovered that if he allowed the participants to give their answers privately, by writing them down on a piece of paper, conformity noticeably decreased, and this held true even if the confederates were still giving their answers aloud.

US Senator Joseph McCarthy launched a Communist witch hunt during the 1950s, generating an environment of fear and high levels of political and social conformity.

Cultural norms

Some psychologists hypothesized that Asch's findings reflected the cultural climate of 1950s America during McCarthyism, when dissent was seen as anti-American and people were imprisoned for their opinions. Later studies found variations in levels of conformity. For instance, a study conducted in the early 1970s (a time of liberal, progressive thinking in the US) found far lower rates of conformity. However, a study in the late 1970s showed a return to higher rates.

Conformity rates for cultures worldwide also differ. Researchers found that individualist cultures such as the US, the UK, and other Western European countries, where personal choice and individual achievements are valued highly, show lower levels of conformity than collectivist cultures such as Japan, Fiji, and African countries, where group belonging is valued highly.

Psychologists have criticized Asch's methods on the grounds that he focused on a stripped-down version of group behavior that does not feature much interaction between participants, or that he was more focused on the individuals within a group than on the group dynamic. Others wonder if he overstated the power of the majority to influence the minority. Serge Moscovici, in particular, disagreed with Asch's analysis and argued that an active minority could influence the majority and bring about change. Moscovici was inspired to develop his own studies to demonstrate how a consistent minority can affect the thinking of the majority.

> A member of a tribe of cannibals accepts cannibalism as altogether fitting and proper.
> **Solomon Asch**

Although Asch acknowledges that social life requires some consensus, he also emphasizes that this is most productive when each individual contributes his independent insight and experience. Consensus should not come out of fear or conformity; the fact that he found the tendency to conform was strong even among intelligent people raised questions about societal values and the quality of education.

Asch's conclusions note the power (and danger) of social influence to shape a person's beliefs and behavior. If something becomes normal for a group, social pressure will ensure conformity. Inspired by Asch's theory, Stanley Milgram's experiment on obedience showed that ordinary people are capable of cruelty when under pressure to conform.

However, the majority of participants in Asch's study, even those who had conformed, stated that they valued independence of mind, leaving him optimistic about humanity. ■

LIFE IS A DRAMATICALLY ENACTED THING

ERVING GOFFMAN (1922–1982)

IN CONTEXT

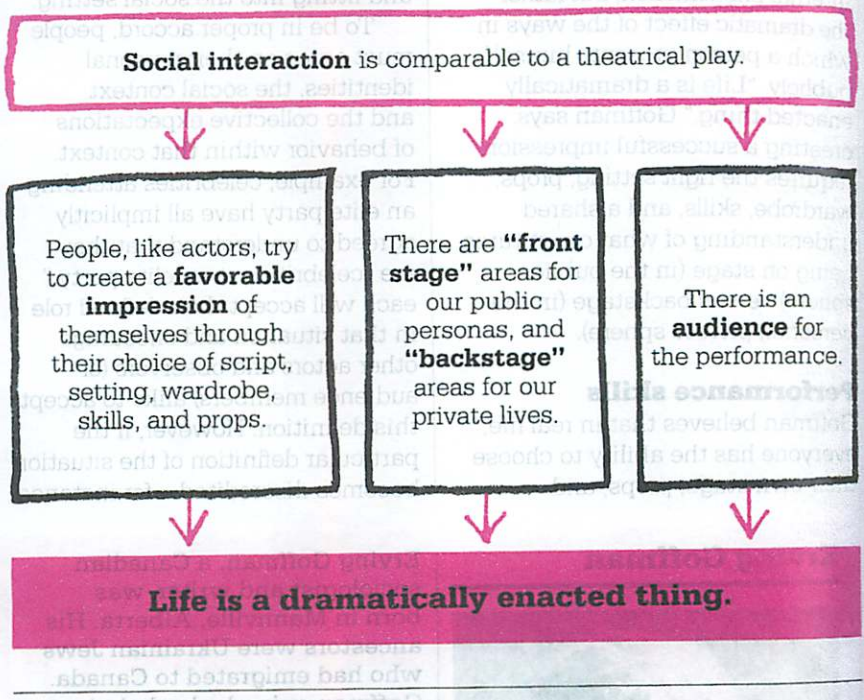
APPROACH
Impression management

BEFORE
1890 William James first makes the distinction between the private self-as-subject ("I") and the public self-as-object ("me").

1902 American sociologist Charles Cooley posits the looking-glass self theory, which states that the self is reflected in the reactions of other people.

AFTER
1990 US psychologists Mark Leary and Robin Kowalski define three ways in which impression management can increase well-being: belonging, self-enhancement, and self-understanding.

1995 Psychologist Sarah Hampson argues that our behavior changes according to who we are with, and different people bring out various aspects of our personality.



Devised by Erving Goffman, impression management is a theory that relates to how we create, maintain, and enhance our social identities. A fundamental aspect of social interaction, Goffman says, is that we try—either consciously or subconsciously—to manipulate and control the way that others perceive us. Whenever we interact with other people, we present a public image of ourselves. In some instances, we may be trying to influence a particular person (such as a job interviewer); in other situations, we may simply be trying to maintain a favorable image of ourselves. In his 1959 book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman draws a parallel between impression management

See also: William James 38–45 ▪ William Glasser 240–41 ▪ Stanley Milgram 246–53 ▪ David D. McClelland 322–23 ▪ Walter Mischel 326–27

and theater, showing how the ways we present ourselves in the real world are similar to the performances of dramatic actors on stage. Each social interaction is driven as much toward having a particular effect on the audience as it is toward honest self-expression.

In fact, according to Goffman's theory, personality is the sum of the various roles that a person plays in his or her life. This implies that the true self is not a private or internal phenomenon, but rather the dramatic effect of the ways in which a person presents himself publicly. "Life is a dramatically enacted thing," Goffman says: creating a successful impression requires the right setting, props, wardrobe, skills, and a shared understanding of what constitutes being on stage (in the public sphere) versus backstage (in the personal, private sphere).

Performance skills

Goffman believes that in real life, everyone has the ability to choose their own stage, props, and costumes to display to the audience. The main goal of both the social actor and the onstage actor is to maintain a sense of coherence through interactions with other actors. This can only be achieved when everyone agrees upon the "definition of the situation," and on the characteristics, expectations, and limitations of a particular performance or interaction, signaling to each other the appropriate ways of reacting and fitting into the social setting.

To be in proper accord, people must agree on their personal identities, the social context, and the collective expectations of behavior within that context. For example, celebrities attending an elite party have all implicitly agreed to understand that they are "celebrities at an elite party;" each will accept their defined role in that situation and encourage other actors and observers (or audience members) alike to accept this definition. However, if the particular definition of the situation becomes discredited—for instance, if the food at the party turns out to be nothing more special than pizza, or there are noncelebrities also in attendance—there is a tendency for people to pretend that nothing has changed, thereby encouraging an artificial sense of believability in order to keep the peace or to avoid embarrassment.

Goffman himself was said to enjoy testing the limits of the rules that shaped encounters in restaurants, lecture theaters, and movie theater lines. ■

Hotel staff are "front stage" when they are interacting with the public. Their behavior may change, becoming less formal, when they are not on duty "backstage".

Erving Goffman

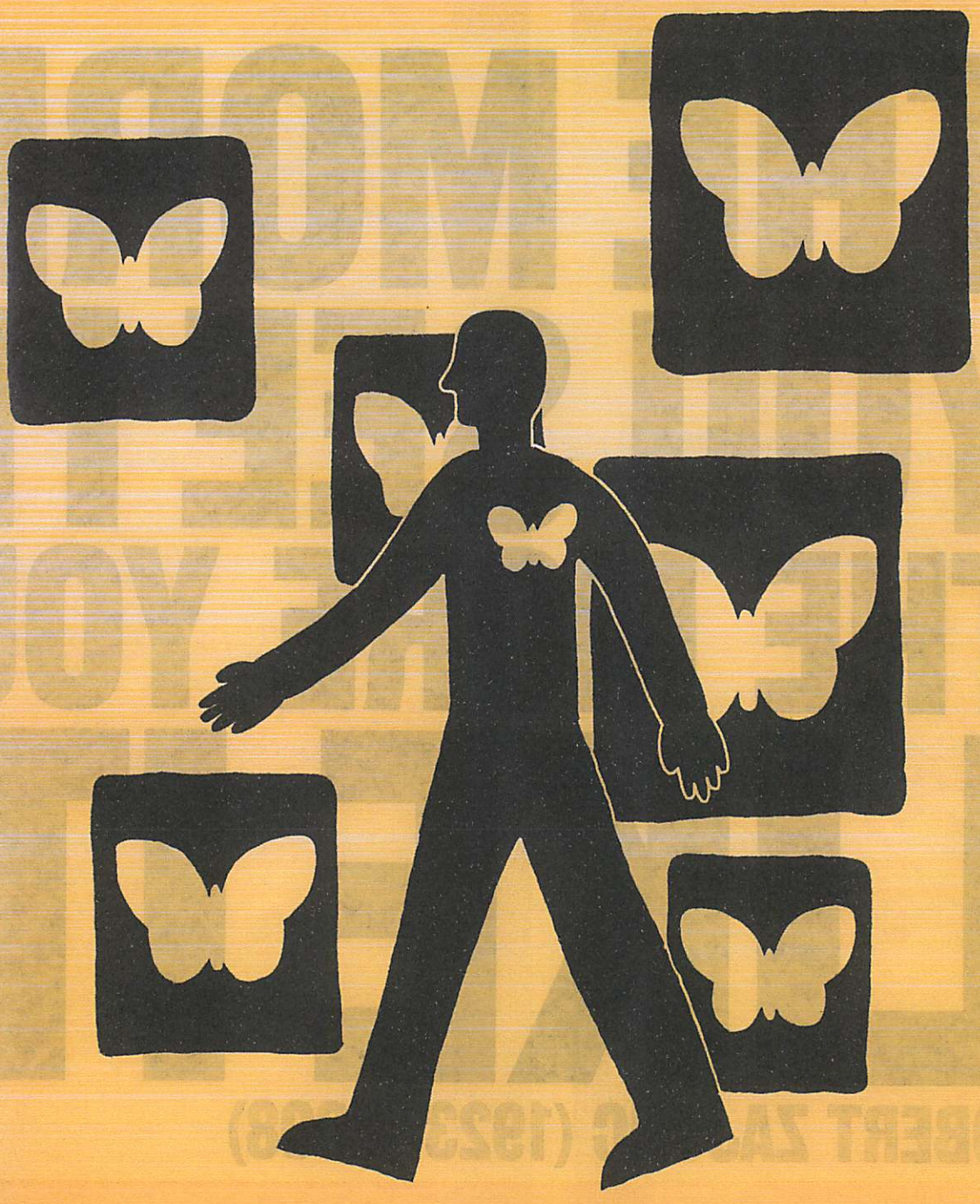
Erving Goffman, a Canadian sociologist and writer, was born in Mannville, Alberta. His ancestors were Ukrainian Jews who had emigrated to Canada. Goffman gained a bachelor's degree in sociology and anthropology at the University of Toronto, then obtained a master's and PhD in sociology at the University of Chicago. In 1962, he was made a full professor at the University of California, and by 1969 had published seven significant books. Tragedy struck in 1964 when his first wife committed suicide; Goffman wrote about this experience in his 1969 paper, *The Insanity of Place*. In 1981, he married again, and in 1982—despite being seen as something of a maverick—became president of the American Sociological Association. He died of stomach cancer just a few months later.

Key works

1959 *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*
1961 *Asylums*
1971 *Relations in Public*
1974 *Frame Analysis*

THE MORE YOU SEE IT THE MORE YOU LIKE IT

ROBERT ZAJONC (1923–2008)



IN CONTEXT

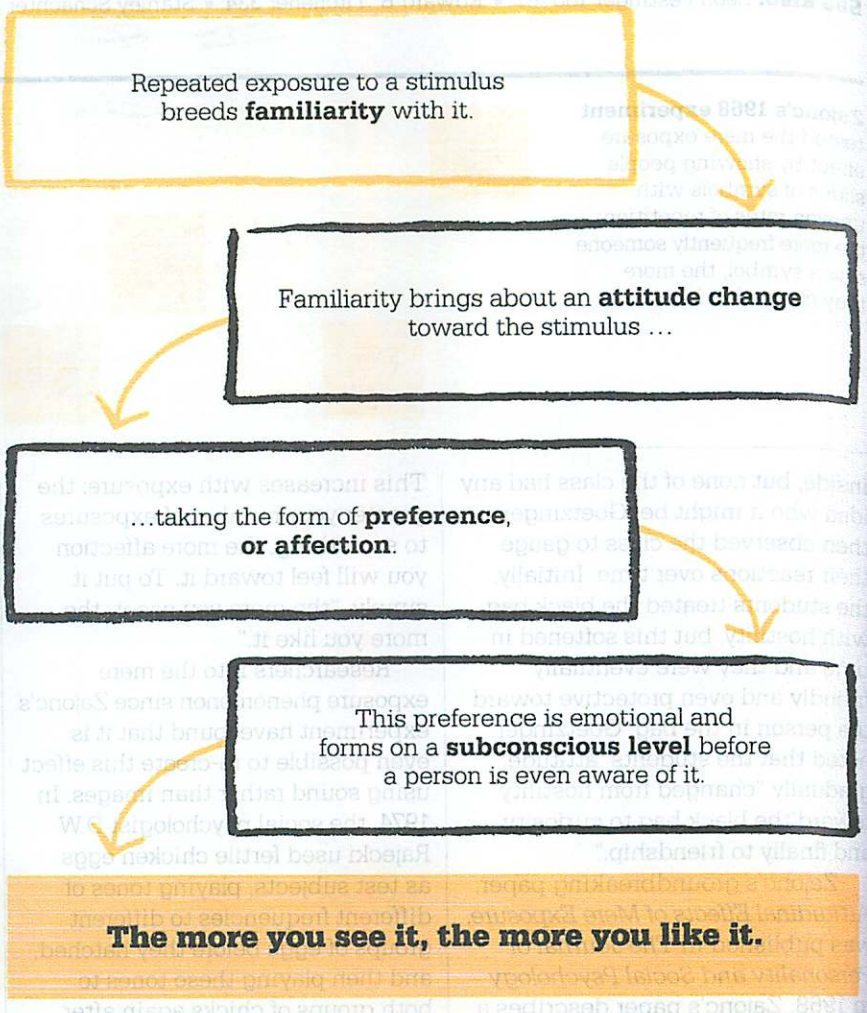
APPROACH
Familiarity

BEFORE
1876 German experimental psychologist Gustav Fechner suggests familiarity increases positive feeling toward art objects, but "supersaturation" leads to aversion.

1910 Edward B. Titchener documents the mere exposure effect, describing it as a "glow of warmth" that people experience in the presence of familiar things.

AFTER
1971 Psychologists T.T. Faw and D. Pien find that adults and children prefer unfamiliar line drawings and patterns to familiar ones.

1989 Robert Bornstein finds that the mere exposure effect is strongest when unfamiliar stimuli are presented briefly.



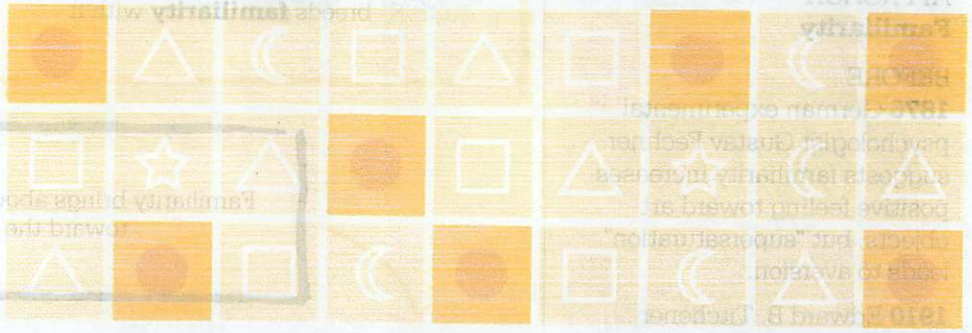
Until the middle of the 20th century, social scientists tended to base their explanations of human behavior on environmental factors. However, the Polish-born psychologist Robert Zajonc believed that to develop a more complete understanding, it is necessary to take into account the functions of the mind as well. Zajonc's main interest was in the relationship between feeling and thought—the intersection of emotion and cognition—and he devoted much of his career toward exploring which of these factors has a stronger influence on behavior. To this end, he performed a seminal experiment in 1968 that led to his discovery of the "mere exposure effect," which is arguably his best-known contribution to the field of social psychology.

Familiarity experiments

Mere exposure, Zajonc explained, simply refers to a condition in which the given stimulus is accessible to the subject's perception, either consciously or subconsciously. The effects of mere exposure had been documented previously by the psychologist Edward B. Titchener who, in 1910, described the "glow of warmth" and feeling of intimacy that a person experiences in the presence of something familiar. However, Titchener's hypothesis was rejected at the time, and the idea faded into relative obscurity.

Zajonc's interest in the effect was aroused by a newspaper article that described a curious experiment that took place at Oregon State University in 1967. The article stated that a "mysterious student" had been attending class for two months, enveloped in a black bag. The professor, Charles Goetzinger, knew the identity of the person

See also: Leon Festinger 166–67 ▪ Edward B. Titchener 334 ▪ Stanley Schachter 338



Zajonc's 1968 experiment tested the mere exposure effect by showing people slides of symbols with uneven rates of repetition; the more frequently someone saw a symbol, the more they claimed to like it.

inside, but none of the class had any idea who it might be. Goetzinger then observed the class to gauge their reactions over time. Initially, the students treated the black bag with hostility, but this softened in time and they were eventually friendly and even protective toward the person in the bag. Goetzinger noted that the students' attitude gradually "changed from hostility toward the black bag to curiosity and finally to friendship."

Zajonc's groundbreaking paper, *Attitudinal Effects of Mere Exposure*, was published in *The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* in 1968. Zajonc's paper describes a series of experiments in which he showed participants a sequence of random images—geometric shapes, Chinese symbols, paintings, and pictures of faces—that were flashed in front of them so rapidly that they were unable to discern which were shown repeatedly. When subjects were later asked which images they preferred, they consistently chose the ones to which they had been most frequently exposed, although they were not consciously aware of this fact. What Zajonc seemed to have discovered was that familiarity brings about an attitude change, breeding affection or some form of preference for the familiar stimulus. This increases with exposure: the greater your number of exposures to something, the more affection you will feel toward it. To put it simply, "the more you see it, the more you like it."

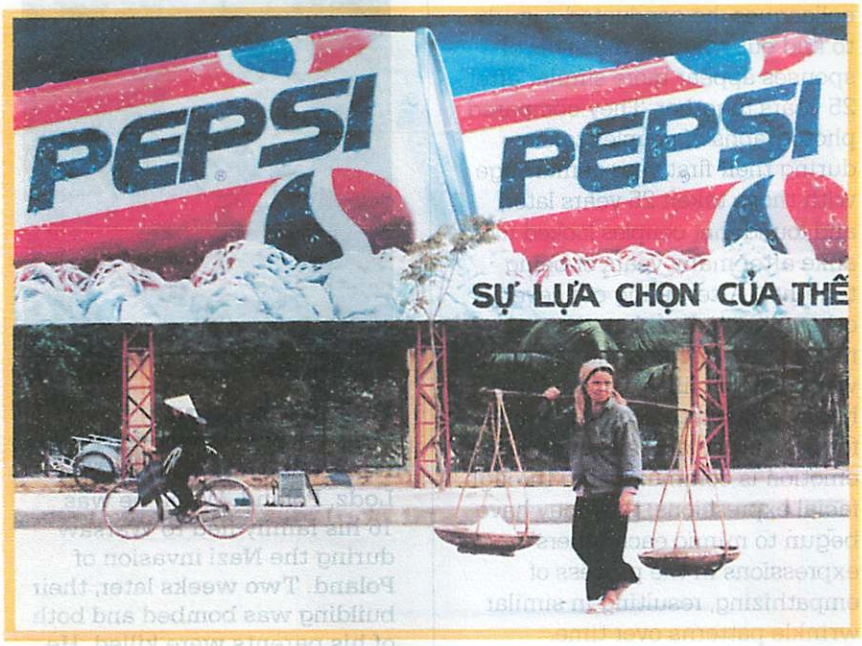
Researchers into the mere exposure phenomenon since Zajonc's experiment have found that it is even possible to re-create this effect using sound rather than images. In 1974, the social psychologist D.W. Rajecki used fertile chicken eggs as test subjects, playing tones of different frequencies to different groups of eggs before they hatched, and then playing these tones to both groups of chicks again after hatching. Without exception, the chicks preferred the tones that had been played to them prenatally.

Preferences are not rational

Zajonc's findings indicate that this preference for familiar things is based purely on the history of exposure to it, and is not affected by a person's expressed personal beliefs or attitudes. This holds true even when exposures take place only on the subliminal level, when subjects are completely unaware that they are being presented with a stimulus. This discovery led to Zajonc's claim that "preferences need no inferences," meaning that affectionate feeling is not based on reasoned judgement. This is contrary to what most of us might imagine to be the case.

In a paper called *Feeling and Thinking*, written in 1980, Zajonc argued that feelings and thoughts are actually very independent of one another. Feelings not only precede thoughts during a person's complex response to a stimulus, but are actually the most powerful determinants of a person's attitudes and decisions. This paper was widely debated, and it helped to bring the study of emotion back to the forefront of Western psychology, in part because the theory bears »

> “Novelty is commonly associated with uncertainty and conflict—states that are more likely to produce negative than positive affect.”
>
> **Robert Zajonc**



> The advertising industry has always attributed to exposure formidable advertising potential.
> **Robert Zajonc**

Repeated exposure to a brand can create a liking for it, even when it is presented without any factual information and requires no decision-making from the person viewing it.

important implications for the study of decision-making processes. It suggests that, contrary to what we may believe, it is not reason and logic that guide our decisions; in fact, we make fast, instinctive, emotion-based decisions before we have even had a chance to consider the choice cognitively—we make judgments without information. If this is true, it follows that our logical reasoning merely justifies and rationalizes the decisions we have already made, rather than actually serving to inform the choice in the first place.

> The form of experience that we came to call "feeling" accompanies all cognitions.
> **Robert Zajonc**

Zajonc concludes that "affect is always present as a companion to thought, whereas the converse is not true for cognition." We can never think about something without a feeling attached; as Zajonc says, we do not just see "a house," we see "a handsome house" or "a pretentious house." Every perception we have contains some affect, or feeling. The primacy of affect over cognition is also apparent in memory, he says, as Frederick Bartlett noted in his book, *Remembering*: "When a subject is being asked to remember, very often the first thing that emerges is something of the nature of attitude."

Interpersonal attraction

The impact of the mere exposure effect extends beyond the confines of the laboratory, and out into the area of interpersonal attraction. In this context, the phenomenon is referred to as the "propinquity effect," the way we tend to form friendships or romantic relationships with people we see regularly. One explanation for this focuses on evolution: when animals are exposed to something for the first time, they often respond with fear and aggression, but repeated exposures—during which the animal realizes the perceived threat does not materialize—lead to a reduction in negative responses. Zajonc explored this notion further with human subjects, discovering that people form very negative attitudes toward an imaginary group of unfamiliar people, attributing unpleasant qualities to them for no apparent reason other than the fact that they are complete strangers. However, as with shapes and symbols, repeated exposure is shown to increase trust and affection.

Another explanation for the propinquity effect focuses on the many factors involved in interpersonal attraction, which include familiarity, similarity of

attitudes, physical attraction, and reciprocal affection. Frequent interactions between people may not only increase the level of familiarity, but also provide an increasing impression of similarity, thereby breeding positive feelings and ultimately attraction.

Exposure and advertising

Advertising is another arena in which the mere exposure effect plays a crucial role, although the picture here is less clear. Research seems to suggest that repeated exposure to a brand or corporate name would boost sales, but this assumption is evidently overly simplistic, as it doesn't take into account other possible effects of frequent exposure.

One study used banner ads to test the mere exposure effect on college-aged students. Subjects were presented with an article to read on a computer screen while banner ads flashed along the top of the screen. The results indicated that those who had been exposed more frequently to the banner ads did indeed rate the ads more favorably than those who had seen it less frequently or not at all. However, another study found that familiarity with a brand name can create an ambivalent attitude. This may be because people have both good and bad associations with familiar companies, and all of these associations are brought to mind with frequent exposure, leading to greater ambivalence. As a result, it is unclear whether mere familiarity, created through repeated advertising, is good for sales.

Familiar faces

Zajonc found that not only does exposure influence how a person feels about someone, but it can even change the way a person looks over time. With a group of colleagues, he conducted a study to find out whether the faces of spouses appear more similar after 25 years together. They compared photographs of couples taken during their first year of marriage with those taken 25 years later, and found that couples looked more alike after many years of being together. After ruling out several other potential explanations, the researchers decided that empathy was the most likely cause. Time had increased the couple's empathy for each other, and since human emotion is communicated through facial expressions, they may have begun to mimic each others' expressions in the process of empathizing, resulting in similar wrinkle patterns over time.

Known for the breadth of his work on the basic processes of social behavior, Zajonc helped to create the modern field of social psychology. He used his work on thought and feeling to explore issues such as racism, genocide, and terrorism, hoping that research could ultimately help to prevent war and human suffering. ■

Couples grow to resemble each other over time because they express empathy through reflecting each other's facial expressions; this leads to the formation of similar facial lines.

Robert Zajonc

Robert Zajonc was born in Lodz, Poland. When he was 16 his family fled to Warsaw during the Nazi invasion of Poland. Two weeks later, their building was bombed and both of his parents were killed. He spent six months recuperating in a hospital, after which he was arrested by Nazi soldiers and sent to a German labor camp. He escaped with two other prisoners and walked 200 miles (320km) to France only to be recaptured and imprisoned again. He broke out for a final time and made his way to the UK.

After World War II, Zajonc moved to the US, where he established himself as an eminent psychologist, gaining psychology degrees to PhD level at the University of Michigan. He worked there until his retirement in 1994, when he became an emeritus professor at Stanford University. Zajonc died of pancreatic cancer at the age of 85.

Key works

1968 *Attitudinal Effects of Mere Exposure*
1975 *Birth Order and Intellectual Development*
1980 *Feeling and Thinking*

WHO LIKES COMPETENT WOMEN?

JANET TAYLOR SPENCE (1923–)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH
Gender studies

BEFORE
1961 Albert Bandura develops social learning theory, which suggests that boys and girls behave differently because they are treated differently.

1970 Robert Helmreich and Elliot Aronson publish a study showing that men find competent men more likeable than incompetent ones.

AFTER
1992 US psychologist Alice Eagly finds that women are evaluated more negatively when they display leadership in a traditionally masculine way.

2003 Simon Baron-Cohen suggests the female brain is predominantly hardwired for empathy, whereas the male brain is hardwired for understanding systems.

Until the women's liberation movement took hold in the 1970s, Janet Taylor Spence's research had focused primarily on anxiety. However, after reading a study conducted by two of her colleagues about how competence in men correlated with likeability, the American psychologist turned to issues relating to gender. Noticing that the study did not consider the female gender, she decided to conduct a similar study that focused entirely on women. The resulting paper—*Who likes competent women?*—was published in 1972.

Working with Robert Helmreich, Taylor Spence set out to test whether men and women preferred competent women to incompetent ones. The two psychologists suspected that only people who believed in sexual equality would prefer competence. To test their hypothesis, they designed the Attitudes Toward Women Scale, which assesses attitudes toward the roles and rights of women by asking questions about education, marriage, professional life, habits, intellectual leadership, and social and economic freedom. The results were surprising. Contrary to the researchers' expectations, subjects not only preferred more competent to less competent women, but even awarded the highest ratings to the women who were competent in stereotypically masculine ways.

This landmark study was seminal in launching gender research as a subcategory within the field of social psychology. ■

> “Even our conservative subjects... rated highest the woman who was competent in stereotypically masculine areas.”
> **Janet Taylor Spence**

See also: Sigmund Freud 92–99 ▪ Guy Corneau 155 ▪ Eleanor E. Maccoby 284–85 ▪ Albert Bandura 286–91 ▪ Simon Baron-Cohen 298–99

FLASHBULB MEMORIES ARE FIRED BY EVENTS OF HIGH EMOTIONALITY

ROGER BROWN (1925–1997)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH
Memory studies

BEFORE
1890 William James makes a distinction between short-term (primary) memory and long-term (secondary) memory.

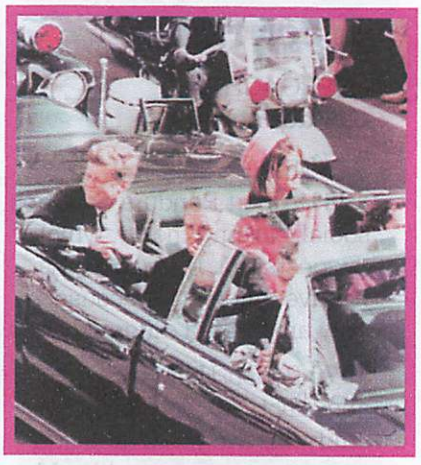
1932 Frederic Bartlett's studies show that recollective memory is not simply a matter of retrieval; it is an active reconstruction of past events.

AFTER
1982 US psychologist Ulric Neisser argues that flashbulb memories do not use a special mechanism and can be inaccurate due to multiple "rehearsals" after the event.

1987 In *Autobiographical Memory,* American psychologist David Rubin suggests that we remember landmark events that define us as people.

In the late 1970s, Harvard University professor Roger Brown co-wrote a paper called *Flashbulb Memories* that became the classic study on a memory phenomenon. Brown and his colleague, James Kulik, coined this term to refer to a special kind of autobiographical memory in which people give a highly detailed, vivid account of the exact moment that they learned about an event with a high shock value.

The paper argues that culturally and personally significant events, such as the shooting of J.F. Kennedy or Martin Luther King, trigger the operation of a special biological memory mechanism ("now print") that creates a permanent record of the event and the circumstances in which we first become aware of it. Almost like a flash photograph, we can picture where we were, who we were with, and what we were doing when we heard the shocking news—such as the destruction of the twin towers on 9/11. Brown and Kulik claim these memories are vivid, accurate, and enduring.



The assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 was shocking and culturally significant. Brown claims these kinds of events cause the formation of "flashbulb" memories.

However, researchers such as Ulric Neisser have contested the special mechanism theory, suggesting that the memories' durability stems from the fact that they are thought about (or rehearsed) repeatedly after the event, by the individual and the wider world, and so are continually reinforced within memory. ■

See also: William James 38–45 ▪ Jerome Bruner 164–65 ▪ Endel Tulving 186–91 ▪ Frederic Bartlett 335–36 ▪ Ulric Neisser 339

THE GOAL IS NOT TO ADVANCE KNOWLEDGE, BUT TO BE IN THE KNOW

SERGE MOSCOVICI (1925–)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH
Social constructivism

BEFORE
1807 German philosopher Georg Hegel says that our ideas and values are fashioned by the *zeitgeist*, or spirit of the age, which constantly changes through the reconciliation of opposing views.

1927 German physicist Werner Heisenberg's "Uncertainty Principle" reveals that the observer affects the observed.

1973 American psychologist Kenneth Gergen writes *Social Psychology as History*, which marks the emergence of social constructivism.

AFTER
1978 In his zone of proximal development theory, Lev Vygotsky puts forward the idea that learning is fundamentally a socially mediated activity.

We overhear something that **arouses our curiosity**.

→ This **merges** with other things we know or have experienced.

↓

We chatter about this with other people and **share our thoughts**.

← Everyone is eager to transmit knowledge and **keep a place in the circle of conversation**.

↓

The **collective conversations** continue, allowing everyone to know more.

→ Attitudes become organized and **values become established**.

↓

Society begins to use new phrases and visions to describe a **collective common sense**.

← **The goal is not to advance knowledge, but to be "in the know."**

See also: Friedrich Herbart 24–25 ▪ Kurt Lewin 218–23 ▪ Solomon Asch 224–27 ▪ Lev Vygotsky 270

In the late 1960s, some social psychologists, known as the social constructivists, argued that the voice of ordinary people was being lost from psychological research. The concern was that individuals were wrongly being portrayed as merely perceiving their social worlds rather than actually constructing them. In order to counteract these worrying trends, social psychologist Serge Moscovici conducted a piece of research that became a classic study of the way people absorb ideas and understand their world.

In his study, *Psychoanalysis: its image and its public*, published in France in 1961, Moscovici explored the belief that all thought and understanding is based on the workings of "social representations." These are the many concepts, statements, and explanations that are created in the course of everyday interactions and communications between people. They allow us to orientate ourselves in our social and material worlds and provide us with the means to communicate within a community. They are, in effect, a collective "common sense"—a shared version of reality—that is built through the mass media, science, religion, and interaction between social groups.

To test his theory, Moscovici looked at how the concepts of psychoanalytic theory had been absorbed within France since World War II. He studied mass-market publications and conducted interviews, searching for evidence of the type of information that had been floating around the collective consciousness. He discovered that psychoanalytic theory had trickled down both in the form of "high culture" and as popular common sense: people thought about and discussed complex psychoanalytic concepts in a way that seemed quite normal, but on the whole they were using simplified versions.

Molding common sense

The translation of difficult concepts into accessible and more easily transmissible language is not problematic, Moscovici contends, because "the goal is not to advance knowledge, but to be in the know;" to be an active participant in the collective circuit. The process allows the unfamiliar to become familiar, and paves the way for science to become common sense. In this way, social representations provide a framework for groups of people to make sense of the world. They also affect how people treat each other within societies. Whenever there is debate over a controversial social issue—such as whether it should be legal for homosexuals to adopt children—the impact and importance of social representations becomes apparent.

Moscovici insists that social representations are genuine forms of knowledge in their own right, not diluted versions of higher-level information. In fact, he makes it clear that these everyday thoughts (rather than the more abstract, scientific versions) are significant, because "shared representations are there to set up and build a common 'reality,' a common sense which becomes 'normal'." ■

Serge Moscovici

Born Srul Hersh Moskovitch to a Jewish family in Braila, Romania, Serge Moscovici attended school in Bucharest, but was expelled due to anti-Semitic laws. After surviving the violent pogrom of 1941, in which hundreds of Jewish people were tortured and murdered, he and his father moved constantly around the country. He learned French during World War II, and co-founded an art journal, *Da*, which was banned due to censorship laws. In 1947, he left Romania and traveled via "displaced persons" camps until he reached France a year later.

In 1949, he gained a degree in psychology, then a PhD under the supervision of Daniel Lagache, with the support of a refugee grant. He co-founded the European Laboratory of Social Psychology in 1965, and as a professor of psychology has taught in prestigious universities across the US and Europe.

Key works

1961 *Psychoanalysis*
1976 *Social Influence and Social Change*
1981 *The Age of the Crowd*

WE ARE BY NATURE SOCIAL BEINGS

WILLIAM GLASSER (1925–)

William Glasser openly rejected conventional psychiatry and the use of medication, claiming that most of the mental and psychological problems that people experience are actually on a spectrum of healthy human experience, and can be improved through changes in behavior. His ideas focus on achieving greater happiness and fulfilment through personal choice, responsibility, and transformation.

In 1965, he developed Reality Therapy, a cognitive-behavioral, problem-solving approach to treatment that encourages clients to seek what they really want in the present moment, and to assess whether or not the behaviors

CONTEXT

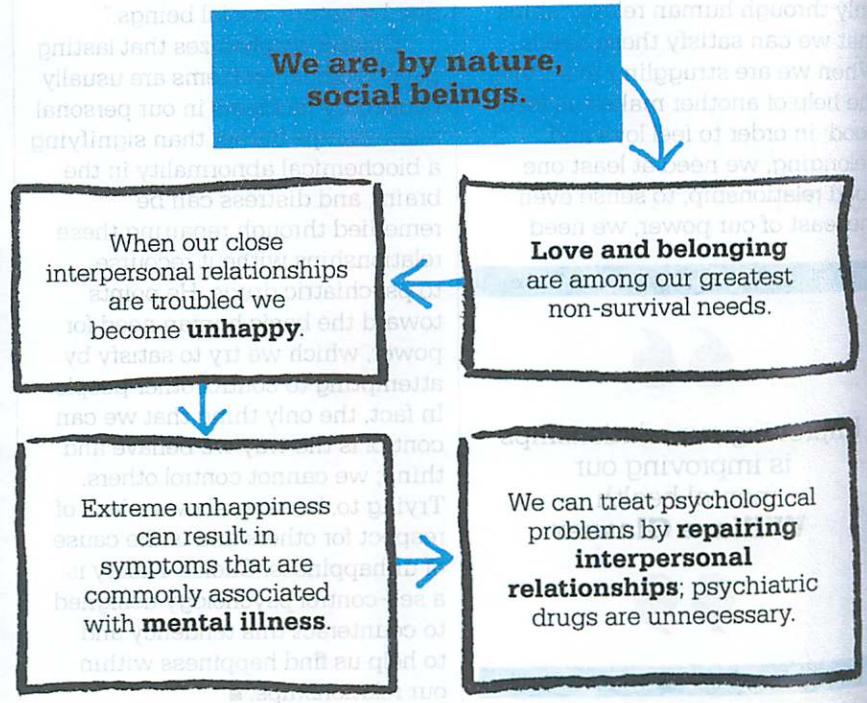
APPROACH
Choice Theory

BEFORE
c.350 BCE Greek philosopher Aristotle says we are driven by three things: sensual appetite, anger, and *boulesis*, the rational desire for what is beneficial.

1943 Clark L. Hull says that all human behavior comes from four primary drives: hunger, thirst, sex, and the avoidance of pain.

1973 US scientist William T. Powers develops perceptual control theory (PCT), which suggests that our behavior is how we control our perceptions in order to keep them close to internally fixed reference levels.

AFTER
2000 US psychiatrist Peter Breggin publishes *Reclaiming our Children*, criticizing the use of psychiatric drugs as "cures" for troubled children.



See also: Emil Kraepelin 31 ▪ Sigmund Freud 92–99 ▪ David Rosenhan 328–29 ▪ Clark L. Hull 335

that they have chosen are bringing them closer to or further away from achieving their goals.

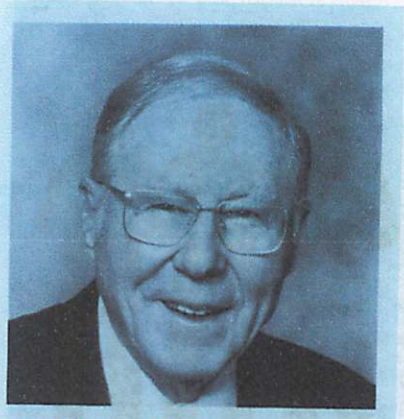
Choice Theory

Over decades of practicing Reality Therapy, Glasser realized that his entire approach was based on the idea of people actively identifying what they want to do in order to be fulfilled, and this led him to develop Choice Theory. This theory holds that we are all motivated to act in ways that increase pleasure and decrease pain—we want to think and behave in ways that will make us feel better. All pleasure and pain, he says, derives from our efforts to satisfy five genetically encoded needs: survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun. Any behavior that satisfies one of these is pleasurable, and any that fails to do so is a source of pain, and ultimately, he explains, it is only through human relationships that we can satisfy these needs. When we are struggling to survive, the help of another makes us feel good; in order to feel love and belonging, we need at least one good relationship; to sense even the least of our power, we need someone to listen to what we say; to feel free, we must feel free from the control of others; and while it is possible to have fun on our own, it is much easier with other people. For these reasons, he argues, "we are, by nature, social beings."

> “Improving our relationships is improving our mental health.”
> **William Glasser**

Interpersonal strife with those close to us leads to rifts and resentments that produce symptoms of mental illness; these problems are, in fact, the logical consequences of troubled relationships.

Glasser emphasizes that lasting psychological problems are usually caused by problems in our personal relationships (rather than signifying a biochemical abnormality in the brain), and distress can be remedied through repairing these relationships without recourse to psychiatric drugs. He points toward the basic human need for power, which we try to satisfy by attempting to control other people. In fact, the only thing that we can control is the way we behave and think; we cannot control others. Trying to, he says, shows a lack of respect for others and is the cause of unhappiness. Choice Theory is a self-control psychology designed to counteract this tendency and to help us find happiness within our relationships. ■

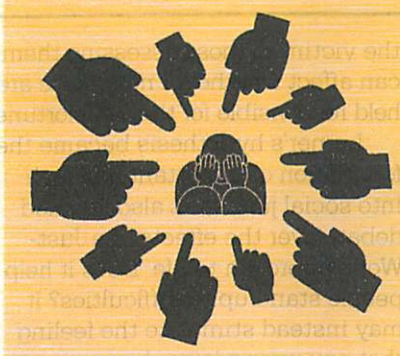


William Glasser

William Glasser was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1925. Originally trained as a chemical engineer, he attended medical school in Cleveland and trained in psychiatry in Los Angeles. He began practicing in 1957. Through the writings on perceptual control theory (PCT) by William T. Powers, Glasser was introduced to control theory systems. In 1967, Glasser founded the Institute for Reality Therapy in California (later renamed the William Glasser Institute), which trains students in Choice Theory. His approach is taught in more than 28 countries, and he has written on mental illness, counseling, and how to improve schools. He is the recipient of many awards, including the "A Legend in Counseling Award" and the Master Therapist designation by the American Psychiatric Association.

Key works

1965 *Reality Therapy*
1969 *Schools Without Failure*
1998 *Choice Theory*
2003 *Warning: Psychiatry Can be Hazardous to your Mental Health*



WE BELIEVE PEOPLE GET WHAT THEY DESERVE

MELVIN LERNER (1929–)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH
Attribution theory

BEFORE
1958 Austrian psychologist Fritz Heider investigates the attribution process, or how people judge the factors that influence a situation.

1965 American psychologists Edward E. Jones and Keith Davis argue that the goal of attribution is to discover how behavior and intention reveal a person's basic nature.

AFTER
1971 US sociologist William J. Ryan coins the phrase "victim blaming," exposing how it is used to justify racism and social injustice.

1975 American psychologists Zick Rubin and Letitia Peplau find that firm believers in a "Just World" tend to be more authoritarian, more religious, and more admiring of existing social and political institutions.

People want to believe that they live in a safe, stable, and **orderly world**...

...where "bad" things only happen to "bad" people, and only "good" things happen to "good" people.

People blame the **victims of misfortune** in order to protect themselves from feeling **vulnerable**.

People operate under the assumption that "people get what they deserve" and deserve what they get.

People are most comfortable when they have a sense of control over their lives. We need to believe that we live in a world where the good are rewarded and the bad are punished, and this contributes significantly to our sense that it is possible to predict, guide, and ultimately control events. This "Just-World hypothesis" is a tendency to believe that "people get what they deserve." But, according to Melvin Lerner, this is a dangerous misconception that places undue importance on the supposed character traits of the people involved rather than on the actual facts of a situation. If someone is suffering or being punished, we find it easier to believe that that person must have done something to deserve such treatment. The Just-World theory becomes a comforting rationalization of seemingly inexplicable events, and stops the world from appearing chaotic or random. It also allows people to believe that as long as

See also: Dorothy Rowe 154 ▪ Elizabeth Loftus 202–07

Homelessness, like may other social problems, is much easier to tolerate or be indifferent to, if you believe that people are ultimately responsible for their own misfortunes.

they are "good," only "good" things will happen to them, generating a false sense of safety and control.

In his book, *The Belief in a Just World*, Lerner argued that we ask children to "be good" and promise them that in return for effectively putting their natural impulses and desires to one side, they will be rewarded in the future. For this contract to be fulfilled, we must live in a just world; and so children grow into adults with this belief firmly in place.

Victim-blaming

In a 1965 study, Lerner found that students who were told that a fellow student had won the lottery rationalized this event by believing that the winner must have worked harder than his peers. It seems that belief in a Just World allows people to adjust the facts of a situation. This can be especially damaging when applied to the way we might view victims of crime or abuse. In rape cases, for example, it is often suggested that the female victim was "asking for it" because she wore a short skirt or was flirtatious, effectively absolving the perpetrator of responsibility and placing it in the hands of the victim. By blaming the victim, outsiders also protect their own sense of safety.

Lerner did emphasize, however, that belief in a Just World does not always lead to victim-blaming. The seeming innocence, attractiveness, status, and degree of similarity of the victim to those assessing them can affect whether or not people are held responsible for their misfortune.

Lerner's hypothesis became the foundation of important research into social justice. It also sparked debate over the effects of a Just-World approach to life. Does it help people stand up to difficulties? It may instead stimulate the feeling that any wrongdoing, however minor or unintentional, leads to disaster—a belief that Australian psychologist Dorothy Rowe has suggested can lead to an increased susceptibility to depression. ■

> People need to believe they live in a Just World.
> **Melvin Lerner**

Melvin Lerner

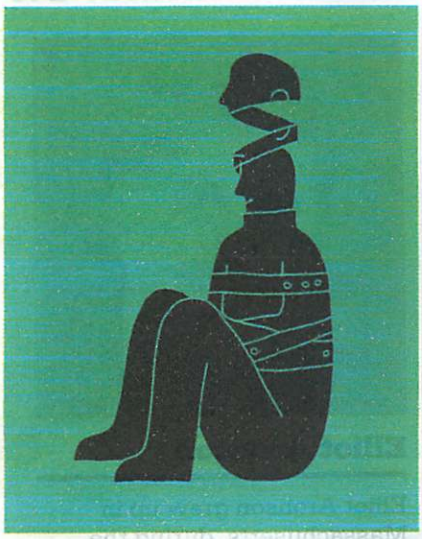
A pioneer of the psychological study of justice, Melvin Lerner studied social psychology at New York University, receiving his doctorate in 1957. He then moved to Stanford University, California, where he studied for his post-doctorate in clinical psychology.

From 1970 to 1994, Lerner taught social psychology at the University of Waterloo in Canada. He has also lectured at a number of universities in the US and Europe, including the University of California, Washington University, and the universities of Utrecht and Leiden in the Netherlands.

Lerner was editor of the journal *Social Justice Research*, and in 2008 was given a Lifetime Achievement Award by the International Society for Justice Research. He is a visiting scholar at Florida Atlantic University.

Key works

1980 *The Belief in a Just World: A Fundamental Delusion*
1981 *The Justice Motive in Social Behavior: Adapting to Times of Scarcity and Change*
1996 *Current Concerns about Social Justice*



PEOPLE WHO DO CRAZY THINGS ARE NOT NECESSARILY CRAZY

ELLIOT ARONSON (1932–)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH
Attitude change

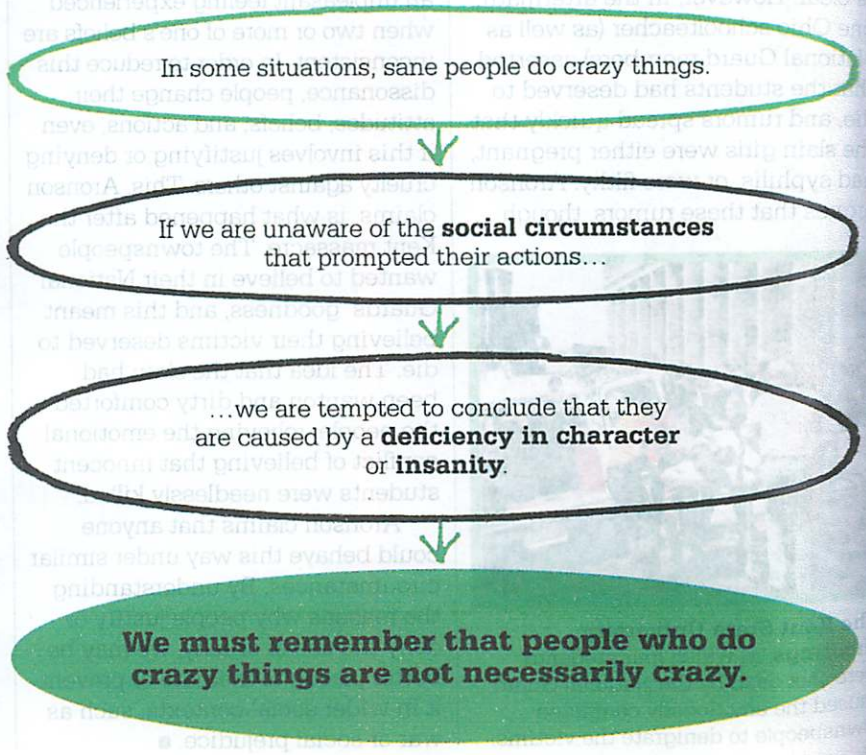
BEFORE
1956 Social psychologist Leon Festinger states his theory of cognitive dissonance, which posits that having inconsistent beliefs causes uncomfortable psychological tension.

1968 The My Lai Massacre of civilians in Vietnam takes place, possibly because US soldiers dehumanized victims to reduce cognitive dissonance.

AFTER
1978 Elliot Aronson devises the Jigsaw method of learning, involving highly interdependent small-group learning, to reduce prejudice and violence at school.

1980s Psychologists argue that dissonance experiments may not reflect real attitude changes, but a desire to seem consistent and hence socially acceptable.

In his 1972 book, *The Social Animal*, Elliot Aronson puts forward "Aronson's First Law:" people who do crazy things are not necessarily crazy. The "crazy things" he refers to include acts of violence, cruelty, or deep prejudice—acts so extreme that they seem to reflect a psychological imbalance on the part of the perpetrator. Aronson, however, argues that although psychotic people certainly exist, even people who are generally psychologically healthy can be driven to such extremes of human behavior that they appear insane. It



See also: Leon Festinger 166–67 ▪ Solomon Asch 224–27 ▪ Melvin Lerner 242–43 ▪ Stanley Milgram 246–53 ▪ Philip Zimbardo 254–55

is therefore important that, before diagnosing people as psychotic, social psychologists make every effort to understand the situations people have been facing and the pressures that were operating on them when the abnormal behavior took place.

Cognitive dissonance

To illustrate his point, Aronson cites an incident that took place at Kent State University, Ohio, in 1970 in which members of the Ohio National Guard shot and killed four unarmed students, wounding nine others. Some of these students had been protesting against the American invasion of Cambodia, but others were simply crossing the campus. The reason for the shootings remains ambiguous, but the fact that it was tragically unnecessary is clear. However, in the aftermath, one Ohio schoolteacher (as well as National Guard members) asserted that the students had deserved to die, and rumors spread quickly that the slain girls were either pregnant, had syphilis, or were filthy. Aronson argues that these rumors, though

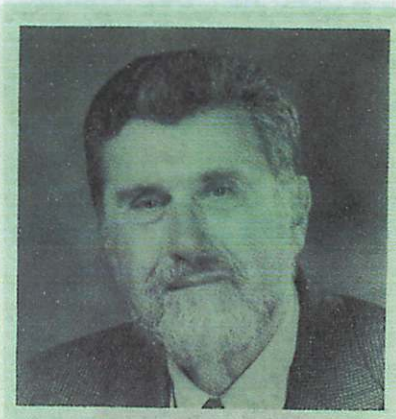
The Kent State University shootings, in which four students were shot dead by the National Guard, caused the emotionally conflicted townspeople to denigrate the victims.

> Some situational variables can move a great proportion of us 'normal' adults to behave in very unappetizing ways.
> **Elliot Aronson**

false, did not reflect the beliefs of psychotic minds, but rather the attempt of pressured and conflicted minds to find relief.

The conflict felt by these people is known as "cognitive dissonance," an unpleasant feeling experienced when two or more of one's beliefs are inconsistent. In order to reduce this dissonance, people change their attitudes, beliefs, and actions, even if this involves justifying or denying cruelty against others. This, Aronson claims, is what happened after the Kent massacre. The townspeople wanted to believe in their National Guards' goodness, and this meant believing their victims deserved to die. The idea that the slain had been wanton and dirty comforted the people, relieving the emotional conflict of believing that innocent students were needlessly killed.

Aronson claims that anyone could behave this way under similar circumstances. By understanding the reasons why people justify or deny the use of cruelty, we may be better placed to mediate or prevent it in wider social contexts, such as war or social prejudice. ■



Elliot Aronson

Elliot Aronson grew up in Massachusetts, during the Great Depression. He won a scholarship to attend Brandeis University, where he earned his bachelor's degree, before completing a master's degree at Wesleyan University and a PhD at Stanford University. He has been a professor at several universities, including Harvard and Stanford.

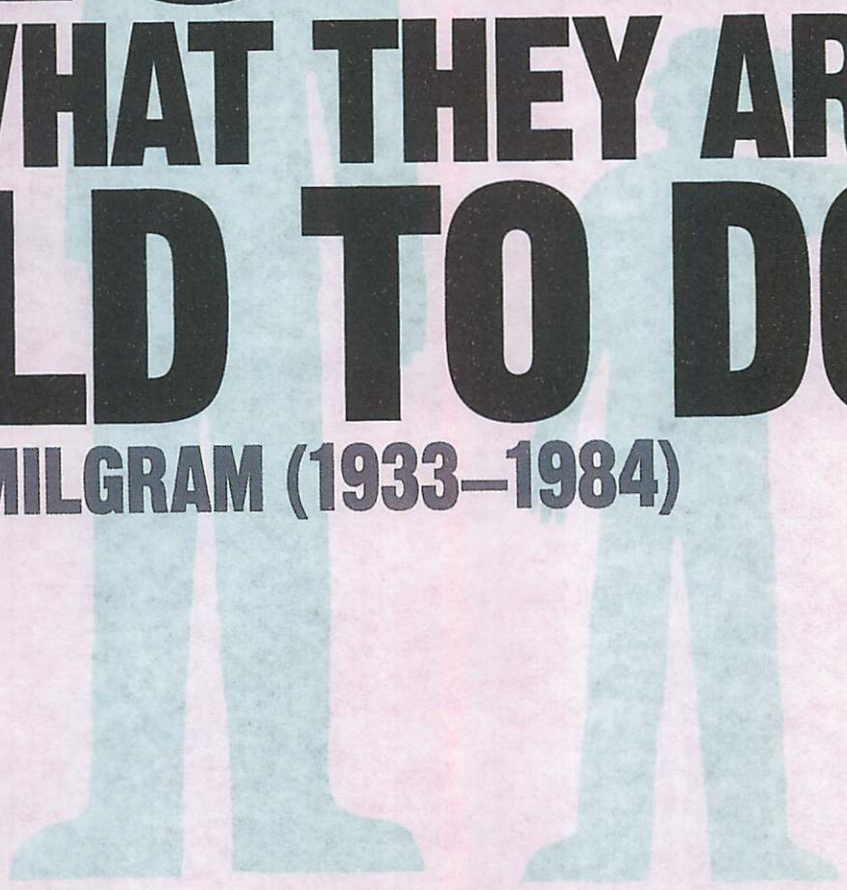
Throughout his career, Aronson has tried to use his research findings to improve the human condition and reduce prejudice. In recognition of his work, he was given the William James Award and the Gordon Allport Prize, and was included in the list of the 100 most influential psychologists of the 20th century, published by the *Review of General Psychology*. He is the only person to have won all three awards offered by the American Psychological Association: for writing, teaching, and research.

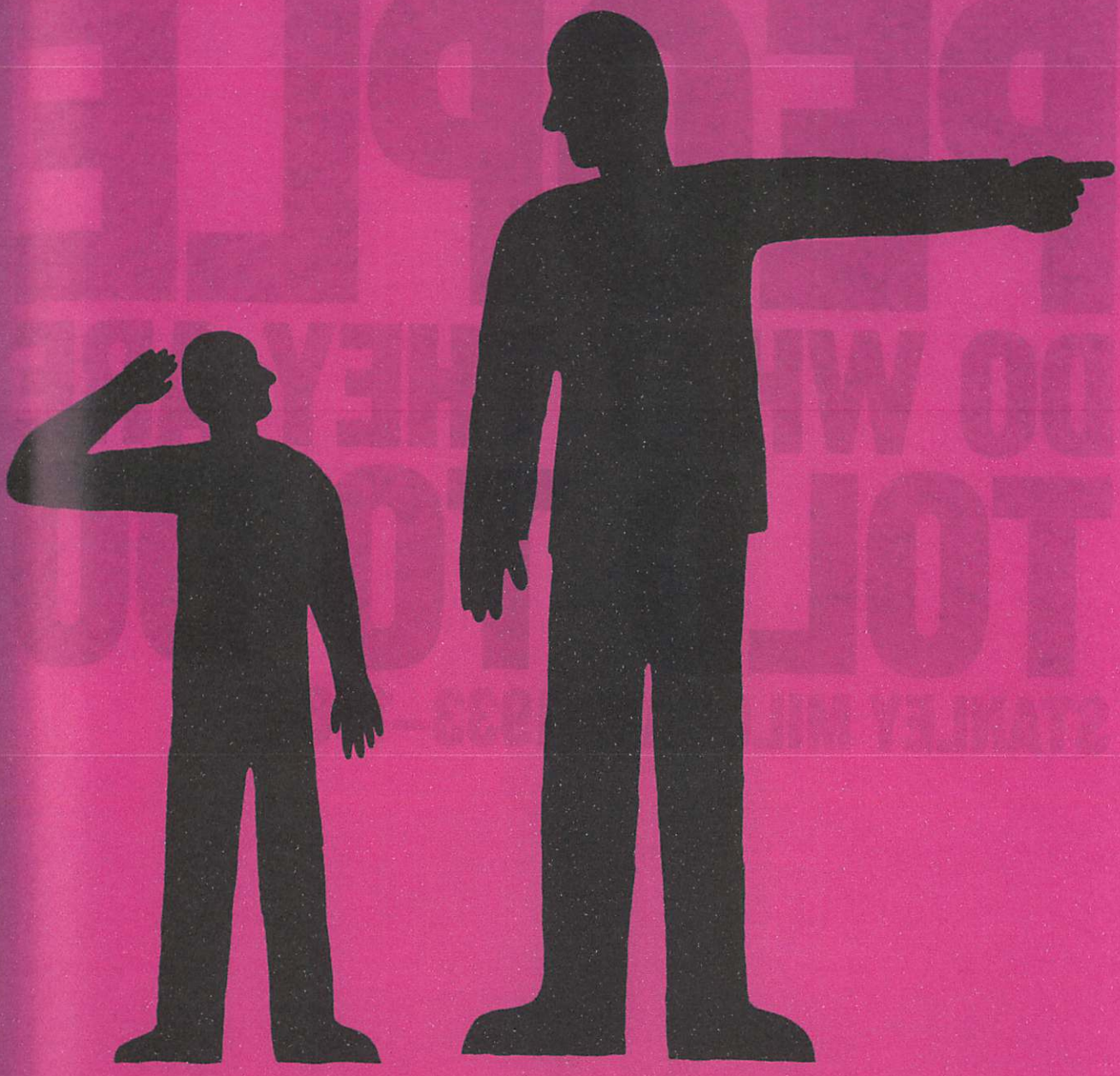
Key works

1972 *The Social Animal*
1978 *The Jigsaw Classroom*
2007 *Mistakes Were Made (but not by me)*

PEOPLE DO WHAT THEY ARE TOLD TO DO

STANLEY MILGRAM (1933–1984)





IN CONTEXT

APPROACH
Conformism

BEFORE
1939–45 During World War II, approximately six million Jews are systematically killed on the orders of Nazi Germany.

1950 Solomon Asch demonstrates the power of social pressure to make people conform in his line-task experiments.

1961 Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann is tried, and claims he was just "following orders."

AFTER
1971 Philip Zimbardo conducts his prison experiment, which demonstrates that in certain situations, otherwise good people can perform evil deeds.

1989 American psychologists Herbert Kelman and V.L. Hamilton state that members of a group obey authority when they accept its legitimacy.

Social psychologist Stanley Milgram dramatically changed our understanding of human obedience when he published *Behavioral Study of Obedience* in 1963. This paper contained results of an experiment that seemed to suggest that the majority of people are capable of causing extreme harm to others when told to do so by a figure of authority. It also caused people to question the ethical limits of psychological experimentation.

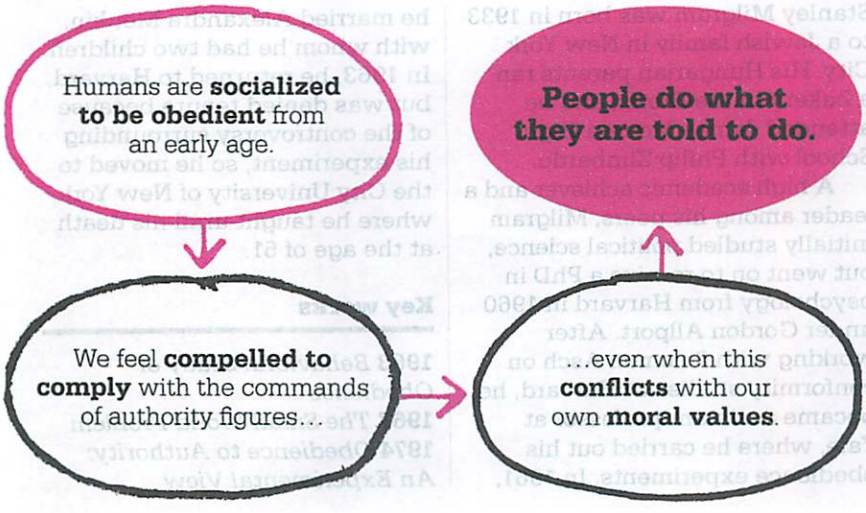
Milgram became particularly interested in studying obedience during the trial of German Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann. The prevailing view was that there was something inherently different about the 20th-century Germans; in the 1950s, psychologists such as Theodor Adorno had suggested that the Germans had certain personality characteristics that made them specifically susceptible to committing the atrocities of the Holocaust. Eichmann, however, claimed he had just been "following orders," so Milgram set out to investigate if this could be true—would an ordinary person lay aside what he knew to be right or wrong merely because he was ordered to do so? His study went on to demonstrate important aspects of the relationship between authority and obedience, and it remains one of the most controversial experiments in the history of psychology.

The power of the group

Milgram believed that it was the situation of World War II and the compulsion to obey—rather than the dispositions of the Germans—that had enabled Nazi cruelty. He maintained that the behavior was a direct result of the situation, and any of us might have behaved identically in that very same context. In the late 1950s, Milgram had worked extensively with Solomon Asch on his conformity studies and had witnessed people agreeing with the decisions of a group, even when they knew these decisions to be wrong. The experiments showed that people are prepared to do or say things that conflict with their own sense of reality. Would they also allow their moral judgments to be affected by the authority of a group or even a single figure?

The Milgram experiment

Milgram set out to test whether normally kind, likeable people could be made to act against their own moral values in a setting where some kind of authority held sway. He devised an investigation of how obedient a selection of "ordinary" men would be when they were told by an authority figure to administer electric shocks to another person. The experiment took place in a laboratory at Yale University in 1961, where Milgram was a professor of psychology. The participants were recruited through a newspaper advertisement, and a total of 40 men were selected from a wide range of



See also: Solomon Asch 224–27 ▪ Serge Moscovici 238–39 ▪ Philip Zimbardo 254–55 ▪ Walter Mischel 326–27

> The most famous and controversial of all obedience experiments.
> **Richard Gross**

occupations, including teachers, postal workers, engineers, laborers, and salesmen. They were each paid $4.50 for their participation; the money was given to them as soon as they arrived at the laboratory, and they were told that the payment was theirs to keep regardless of what happened during the experiment.

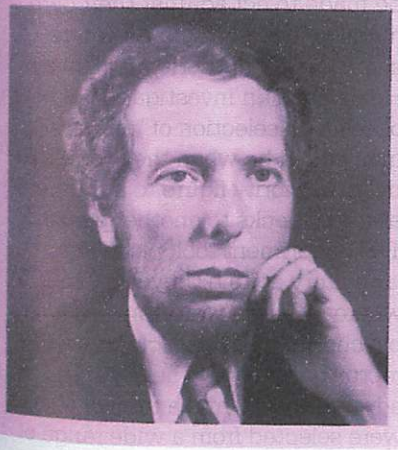
In the laboratory, Milgram had created a phony (but very impressive and realistic-looking) electric shock generator. This had 30 switches marked in 15-volt increments with labels that indicated the intensity of different ranges of shock levels, from "slight shock" at one end, to "extreme intensity shock," "danger: severe shock," and finally, one marked simply "XXX," at the other.

The role of the experimenter or "scientist" was played by a biology teacher who introduced himself to the participants as Jack Williams. In order to give the impression of authority, he was dressed in a gray laboratory technician's coat and maintained a stern and emotionless demeanor throughout each of the experiments.

The participants were told that the study intended to investigate the effects of punishment on learning. They were told that of two volunteers, one would be the learner and the other the teacher. In fact, one of the two "volunteers" in each case was not a participant but a stooge: he was a likeable accountant called Mr. Wallace, who had been trained to play the role of the victim. When Mr. Wallace and the genuine participant drew paper from a hat to determine which role they would play, the draw was always rigged so that Mr. Wallace took on the role of "learner" in every instance. In full view of the participant, the "learner" (Mr. Wallace) was strapped into an "electric chair" with an electrode attached to his wrist; the participant was told that this electrode was attached to the shock generator »

Convincingly wired up, Mr. Wallace pretended to be an innocent volunteer. His screams failed to prevent 65 percent of participants from administering the highest level of fake electric shock.

Stanley Milgram



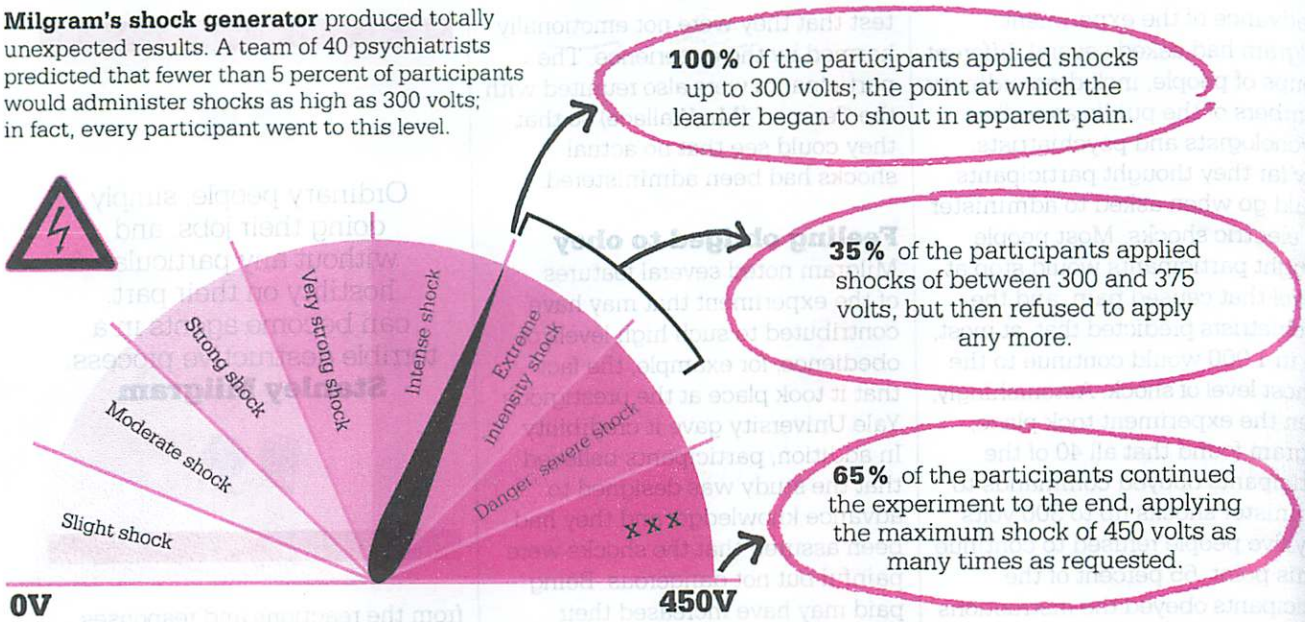
Stanley Milgram was born in 1933 to a Jewish family in New York City. His Hungarian parents ran a bakery in the Bronx, and he attended James Monroe High School with Philip Zimbardo.

A high academic achiever and a leader among his peers, Milgram initially studied political science, but went on to receive a PhD in psychology from Harvard in 1960 under Gordon Allport. After working with Solomon Asch on conformity studies at Harvard, he became assistant professor at Yale, where he carried out his obedience experiments. In 1961, he married Alexandra Menkin, with whom he had two children. In 1963, he returned to Harvard, but was denied tenure because of the controversy surrounding his experiment, so he moved to the City University of New York, where he taught until his death at the age of 51.

Key works

1963 *Behavioral Study of Obedience*
1967 *The Small World Problem*
1974 *Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View*

Milgram's shock generator produced totally unexpected results. A team of 40 psychiatrists predicted that fewer than 5 percent of participants would administer shocks as high as 300 volts; in fact, every participant went to this level.



located in an adjacent room. The participant heard the "scientist" tell the "learner" (Mr.. Wallace) that "although the shocks can be extremely painful, they cause no permanent damage." To make the situation appear more authentic, the scientist then wired up the participant and gave him a sample shock of 45 volts—which was in fact the only shock strength that the generator could produce.

At this point, the participant was moved to the room containing the shock generator and asked to assume the role of "teacher." He was asked to read a series of word pairs (such as "blue-girl", "nice-day") aloud for the learner to memorize. After this he was to read out a series of single words; the learner's task was to recall the pairing word in each case and to indicate his answer by pressing a switch that illuminated a light on the shock generator. If the learner's answer was correct, the questions continued; if the answer was incorrect, the participant was instructed to tell the learner the correct answer, announce the level of shock he was about to receive, and press a switch to administer the shock. Participants were instructed to increase the shock level by 15 volts (in other words, to keep moving up the shock scale on the machine) with every wrong answer.

Applying the shocks

As part of the experiment, the learner (Mr. Wallace) had been briefed to answer incorrectly to around one question in every four, to ensure that the participant would be required to start applying electric shocks. During the experiment, the learner would pound the wall once the voltage had reached 300, and shout: "I absolutely refuse to answer any more! Get me out of here! You can't hold me here! Get me out!" As the shock level increased, the learner would shout more frantically, and then eventually cease making any noise at all; questions would be met with nothing but an eerie silence. The participant was told to treat any unanswered question as an incorrectly answered question and apply the next level of shock voltage. If he expressed misgivings about continuing the experiment, he received a verbal prod from the "scientist" to encourage him, from a simple request to continue, to finally being told that he had no choice but to go on. If he refused to obey after the last prod, the experiment was terminated.

> "With numbing regularity, good people were seen to knuckle under the demands of authority and perform actions that were callous and severe."
> **Stanley Milgram**

In advance of the experiment, Milgram had asked several different groups of people, including ordinary members of the public as well as psychologists and psychiatrists, how far they thought participants would go when asked to administer the electric shocks. Most people thought participants would stop at a level that caused pain, and the psychiatrists predicted that, at most, one in 1,000 would continue to the highest level of shock. Astonishingly, when the experiment took place, Milgram found that all 40 of the participants obeyed commands to administer shocks up to 300 volts. Only five people refused to continue at this point; 65 percent of the participants obeyed the instructions of the "scientist" right to the end, obeying commands to administer shocks to the top level of 450 volts.

Their discomfort at doing so was often evident: many showed signs of severe distress, tension, and nervousness over the course of the experiment. They stuttered, trembled, sweated, groaned, broke out into nervous laughing fits, and three people had full-blown seizures. In every instance of the experiment, the participant stopped and questioned it at some point; some even offered to refund the money they were paid at the beginning. Interviews after the experiments confirmed that, with only a few exceptions, participants had been completely convinced that the "learning experiment" was real.

All participants were fully debriefed so they understood what had actually taken place, and they were asked a series of questions to test that they were not emotionally harmed by the experience. The participants were also reunited with the "learner" (Mr. Wallace) so that they could see that no actual shocks had been administered.

Feeling obliged to obey

Milgram noted several features of the experiment that may have contributed to such high levels of obedience; for example, the fact that it took place at the prestigious Yale University gave it credibility. In addition, participants believed that the study was designed to advance knowledge, and they had been assured that the shocks were painful but not dangerous. Being paid may have increased their sense of obligation, as did the fact they had volunteered to take part. To test these explanations, Milgram ran many variations on the study, but changing the context had only minor effects on the results.

Milgram wanted to see if the inclination to obey authority figures can become the major factor in determining behavior, even in extreme circumstances. It is clear from the reactions and responses of the participants that obeying the "scientist" was violating their own sense of morality and negatively affecting them both physically and emotionally, but the pressure to comply was simply too powerful to defy in most cases.

> Ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process.
> **Stanley Milgram**

This sense of obedience, Milgram felt, comes from the fact that people are socialized from a very young age (by parents and »

By the 1960s, Yale University was known to the general public as being highly prestigious; its authority may have seemed literally unquestionable to the participants of Milgram's study.

teachers) to be obedient and to follow orders—especially the rules set forth by authority figures. As Milgram says, "obedience is as basic an element in the structure of social life as one can point to... it serves numerous productive functions." But equally, the inhumane policies of the death camps in World War II "could only be carried out on a massive scale if a very large number of persons obeyed orders." His experiments clearly demonstrated that normally harmless people become capable of committing cruel acts when a situation pressures them to do so.

In describing his results, Milgram also turned to the theory of conformism, which states that when a person has neither the ability nor expertise to make a decision, he will look to the group to decide how to behave. Conformity can limit and distort an individual's response to a situation, and seems to result in a diffusion of responsibility—which Milgram felt was crucial to comprehending the atrocities carried out by the Nazis. However, the conflict between a person's conscience and external authority exerts a huge internal pressure, and Milgram felt that this accounted for the extreme distress experienced by the participants in his study.

Ethical concerns

There were many ethical concerns associated with Milgram's study. When it was first published, the ensuing controversy was so great that the American Psychological Association revoked his membership for a full year. However, it was eventually reinstated, and Milgram's 1974 book *Obedience to Authority* received the annual Social Psychology Award.

The major concern was that the participants in the experiment were explicitly deceived, both about the nature of the study and about the reality of the electric shocks. Milgram's defense was that he could not have obtained realistic results without employing deception, and all of the participants were debriefed after the experiment. Self-knowledge, he argued, is a valuable asset, despite the discomfort that the participants may have felt when forced to confront the fact that they behaved in a previously unthinkable way.

However, many psychologists remained uneasy, and the study was ultimately crucial in the development of ethical standards of psychological experimentation. It helped to define important principles such as the avoidance of intentional deceit of participants, and the need to protect experimental participants from emotional suffering.

Cross-cultural validity

Another criticism of Milgram's study was that he used an unrepresentative sample: American men do not necessarily reflect the general population. Even so, Milgram was able to conclude that obedience was not a particular feature found in the minds of 20th-century Germans, but something more universal. A number of cross-cultural replications

The behavior of Nazis during World War II had been attributed to a prevalence of the "authoritarian personality" in the population; this was questioned by Milgram's experiments.

> "Obedience to authority is not a feature of German culture, but a seemingly universal feature of human behavior."
> **Stanley Milgram**

> In wartime, a soldier does not ask whether it is good or bad to bomb a hamlet.
> **Stanley Milgram**

American soldiers in Vietnam reported that their behavior became unacceptable by degrees—as with the shock generator—until they found themselves murdering innocents.

of the original experiment have demonstrated remarkably high consistency in results within societies, but slight differences between one country and another. For example, in most of North America and Europe, results are very similar to those found in Milgram's original experiment, with very high percentages of obedience. Asian studies, however, show even greater levels of obedience (in East Asian and Muslim countries in particular), while aboriginal African and Latin American populations, as well as the Inuit peoples of Canada, show far less obedience.

Virtual torture

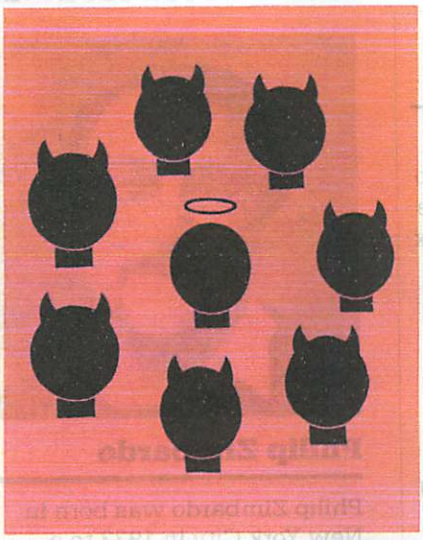
In 2006, the psychologist Mel Slater set out to see what the effect would be if participants were made explicitly aware that the situation was not real. His replication used a computer simulation of the learner and shock process, so participants administering the shocks were fully aware that the learner was computer-generated. The experiment was run twice: first with the virtual learner communicating only by text, and then with the computer-generated model visible on screen. Those with only text contact with the learner had little trouble administering the shocks; but when the virtual learner was visible, participants acted exactly as they had in Milgram's original experiment.

Society demands obedience

The notion of a society rests on an understanding that individuals are prepared to relinquish some personal autonomy and look to others of higher authority and social status to make decisions on a larger scale or from a higher, broader perspective. Even the most democratic of societies requires the rulings of a recognized, legitimate authority to take precedence over individual self-regulation, in pursuit of the greater collective good. In order for any society to function, its populace must agree to obey its rules. Legitimacy is, of course, the key, and there are countless historical examples of people using their authority to persuade others to commit crimes against humanity.

Equally importantly, Milgram showed that it is "not so much the kind of person a man is, as the kind of situation in which he finds himself that determines how he will act." Instead of examining personalities to explain crimes, he says, we should examine the context, or situation.

Milgram's seminal study was heavily criticized at the time, not least because it painted an unappealing and chilling portrait of human nature. It is easier to believe that there are fundamental differences between the Nazis and the rest of humanity than to accept that in certain situations, many of us are capable of committing extraordinary acts of violence. Milgram held up a light to the dark realities concerning power and the consequences of our tendency to obey authority figures, and in so doing, he simultaneously absolved and made villains of us all. ■



WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU PUT GOOD PEOPLE IN AN EVIL PLACE?

PHILIP ZIMBARDO (1933–)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH
Conformity

BEFORE
1935 Muzafer Sherif demonstrates how groups quickly come to develop a "social norm" in his autokinetic effect experiments.

1940s Kurt Lewin shows how people's behavior changes as their situations are altered.

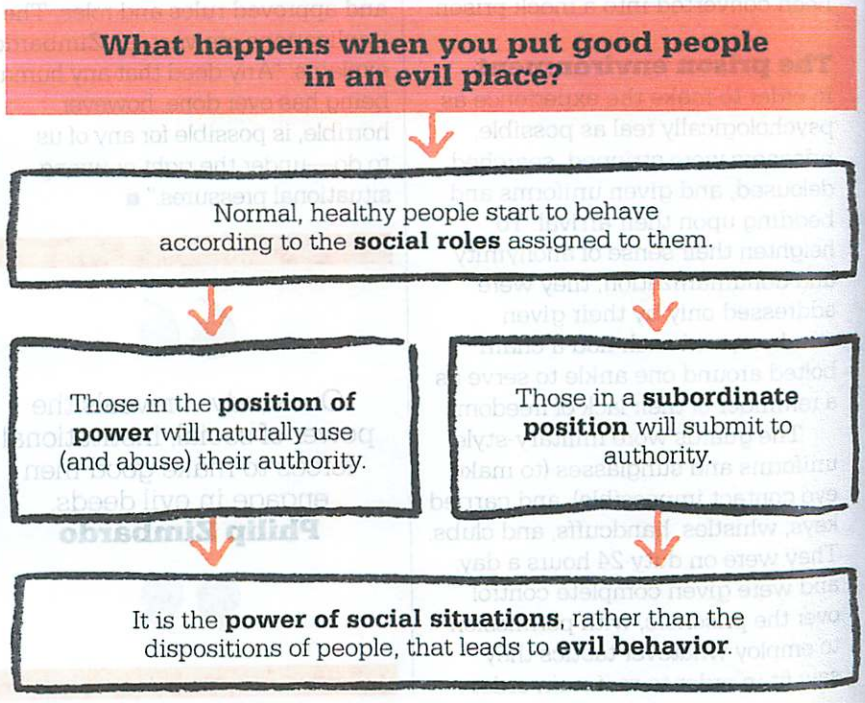
1963 Stanley Milgram conducts his obedience studies, which demonstrate that people will obey authority even if it means committing cruel acts.

AFTER
2002 British psychologists Steven Reicher and Alex Haslam extend Zimbardo's study to explore positive rather than negative group behavior.

2004 Zimbardo defends a former Abu Ghraib prison guard in court, arguing that the circumstances caused the guard's cruel behavior.

Stanley Milgram's shocking obedience studies revealed that people will obey authority figures even if this entails acting against their own moral convictions. In the aftermath, Philip Zimbardo set out to discover how people would behave if they were put into a position of authority with unimpeded power. Would they willingly use (or abuse) the power granted to them? In 1971 he carried out the now-famous Stanford Prison experiment, using 24 middle-class American college students who had undergone tests to establish that they were mentally healthy.

On the flip of a coin the students were randomly assigned the role of either "guard" or "prisoner," and one



See also: John B. Watson 66–71 ▪ Zing-Yang Kuo 75 ▪ Kurt Lewin 218–23 ▪ Elliot Aronson 244–45 ▪ Stanley Milgram 246–53 ▪ Muzafer Sherif 337

The "prisoners" rebelled against the "guards," but the guards' tactics became more aggressive. They began dividing the prisoners into groups, giving some rewards and others punishments.

Sunday morning soon afterwards, the prisoners were arrested at their homes, booked at a real police station, then transferred to the basement of the Stanford University psychology department, which had been converted into a mock prison.

The prison environment

In order to make the experience as psychologically real as possible, prisoners were stripped, searched, deloused, and given uniforms and bedding upon their arrival. To heighten their sense of anonymity and dehumanization, they were addressed only by their given numbers, and each had a chain bolted around one ankle to serve as a reminder of their lack of freedom.

The guards wore military-style uniforms and sunglasses (to make eye contact impossible), and carried keys, whistles, handcuffs, and clubs. They were on duty 24 hours a day, and were given complete control over the prisoners, with permission to employ whatever tactics they saw fit in order to maintain order.

To the researchers' amazement, the environment quickly became so threatening to participants that the study had to be ended after only six days. Every guard became abusive and authoritarian; prisoners were denied food or bedding, hooded, chained, and made to clean toilet bowls with their hands. As the boredom increased, they used the prisoners as their playthings, making them take part in degrading games. After just 36 hours, one prisoner had to be released because of uncontrolled crying, fits of rage, and severe depression. When other prisoners showed symptoms of acute distress, Zimbardo realized the situation had become dangerous and ended the experiment.

Zimbardo's experiment showed that good people can be induced into behaving in evil ways by immersion in "total situations" that have an apparently legitimizing ideology and approved rules and roles. The implications are vast, as Zimbardo explains: "Any deed that any human being has ever done, however horrible, is possible for any of us to do—under the right or wrong situational pressures." ■

> Our study... reveals the power of social, institutional forces to make good men engage in evil deeds.
> **Philip Zimbardo**

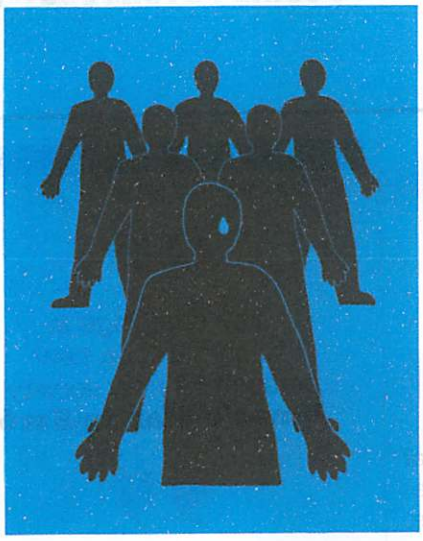
Philip Zimbardo

Philip Zimbardo was born in New York City in 1933 to a Sicilian-American family, and was a classmate of Stanley Milgram at James Monroe High School in the Bronx. He went on to earn his BA degree from Brooklyn College, New York, and a PhD from Yale. He taught at several universities before moving to Stanford in 1968, where he is still a psychology professor.

In 2000, Zimbardo stated that he agreed with George Armitage Miller that it was time to "give psychology away to the public," and his career has reflected this idea. In the 1980s he presented a popular TV series on "discovering psychology." The American Psychological Foundation presented him with an award for Distinguished Lifetime Contributions to General Psychology in 2000, and two years later he was elected president of the American Psychological Association.

Key works

1972 *The Stanford Prison Experiment*
2007 *The Lucifer Effect*
2008 *The Time Paradox*
2010 *Psychology and Life*



TRAUMA MUST BE UNDERSTOOD IN TERMS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

IGNACIO MARTIN-BARO (1942–1989)

IN CONTEXT

APPROACH
Liberation psychology

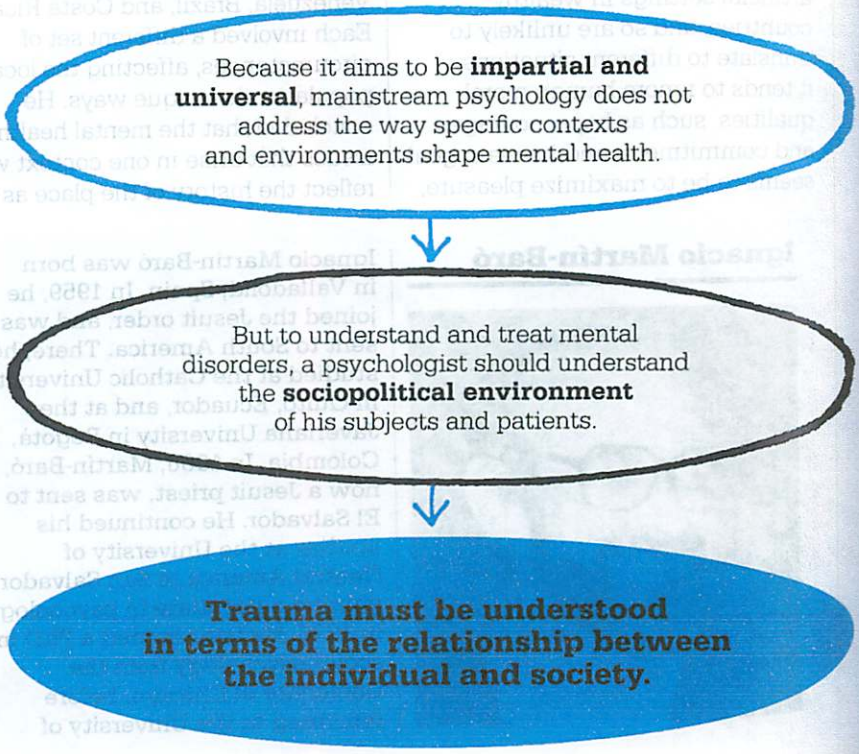
BEFORE
1965 Community psychology, a new discipline investigating the relationships between individuals and communities, arises from discussions at the Swampscott Conference, Massachusetts.

1970s A crisis over the relevance of social psychology, the study of links between social conditions, emotions, and behaviors, erupts in Britain, North America, and most acutely in Latin America.

AFTER
1988 The Latin American Institute of Mental Health and Human Rights is founded.

1997 US psychologists Isaac Prilleltensky and Dennis Fox publish *Critical Psychology*, highlighting how traditional psychology can help sustain injustice and social oppression.

Ignacio Martín-Baró made his claim that "trauma must be understood in terms of the relationship between the individual and society" after witnessing first-hand the social injustices and violence endemic to El Salvador in the 1980s. Rejecting the idea of an impartial, universal approach to psychology, he came to realize that psychologists must take into account the historical context and social conditions of the people they are studying. He believed that while some mental health problems reflect an abnormal reaction to



See also: Lev Vygotsky 270 ▪ Jerome Kagan 339

reasonably normal circumstances, the problems specific to oppressed and exploited groups tend to reflect a perfectly understandable and normal reaction to abnormal circumstances. Martín-Baró decided that psychologists needed to be more aware of how living within a difficult context affects mental health, and that they should help the society being studied to transcend its history of oppression. In the mid-1980s, he launched the branch of liberation psychology, which is committed to improving the lives of all marginalized and oppressed people.

Liberation psychologists claim that traditional psychology has many inadequacies. It frequently fails to offer practical solutions to social problems; many of its principles are developed from artificial settings in wealthy countries, and so are unlikely to translate to different situations; it tends to ignore human moral qualities, such as hope, courage, and commitment; and its main goal seems to be to maximize pleasure, rather than considering how to awaken and drive the desire for justice or freedom.

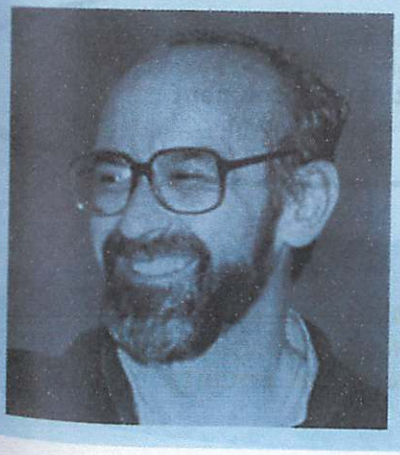
Traumatized societies

His collection *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*, published posthumously in 1994, captures several decades of Martín-Baró's concerns. It addresses the use of psychology as an instrument of war and political manipulation, the role of religion in psychological warfare, and the impact of trauma and violence on mental health. Martín-Baró studied areas where dependent economies and severe inequalities had led to relentless poverty and social exclusion. He examined the psychological impact of civil war and oppression in El Salvador, the dictatorships in Argentina and Chile, and poverty in Puerto Rico, Venezuela, Brazil, and Costa Rica. Each involved a different set of circumstances, affecting the local population in unique ways. He concluded that the mental health issues that arise in one context will reflect the history of the place as well as its social and political environment, and that individuals must be treated with both these factors in mind.

> The challenge is to construct a new person in a new society.
> **Ignacio Martín-Baró**

Martín-Baró focused on Central America, but his ideas are relevant anywhere social and political turmoil disrupts daily life. His humane and impassioned perspective draws a crucial link between mental health and the struggle against injustice, and attempts to find fresh ways of addressing associated psychological issues more effectively. ■

Ignacio Martín-Baró



Ignacio Martín-Baró was born in Valladolid, Spain. In 1959, he joined the Jesuit order, and was sent to South America. There, he studied at the Catholic University in Quito, Ecuador, and at the Javeriana University in Bogotà, Colombia. In 1966, Martín-Baró, now a Jesuit priest, was sent to El Salvador. He continued his studies at the University of Central America in San Salvador, gaining a licentiate in psychology in 1975. He later earned a PhD in social psychology from the University of Chicago, before returning to the University of Central America and eventually becoming head of its psychology department. Martín-Baró was openly critical of El Salvador's rulers, and in 1986 set up the University Institute of Public Opinion. He and five others were murdered by an army death squad for their exposure of political corruption and injustice.

Key works

1983 *Action and Ideology*
1989 *System, Group and Power*
1994 *Writings for a Liberation Psychology*