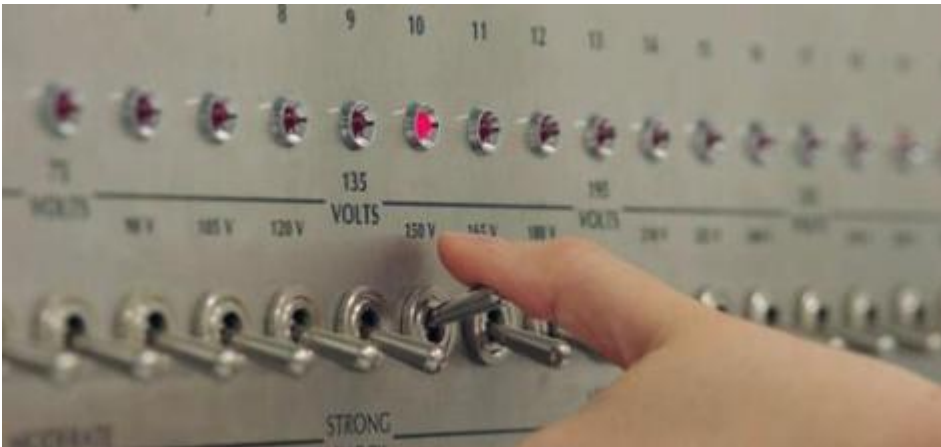


5 Psychological Experiments That Explain The Modern World

Description

[Authored by Kit Knightly via Off-Guardian.org.](#)

The world is a confusing place. People do things that don't make any sense, think things that aren't supported by facts, endure things they do not need to endure, and viciously attack those who try to bring these things to their attention.



If you've ever wondered why, you've come to the right place.

Any casual reader of the alternate media landscape will eventually come up with a reference to Stanley Milgram, or Philip Zimbardo, the "Asch Experiment" or maybe all three.

"Cognitive Dissonance", "Diffusion of Responsibility", and "learned helplessness" are phrases that regularly do the rounds, but where do they come from and what they mean?

Well, here are the important psycho-social experiments that teach us about the way people think, but more than that they actually explain how our modern world works, and just how we got into this mess.

1. THE MILGRAM EXPERIMENT

The Experiment: Let's start with the most famous. Beginning in 1963, Yale psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted a series of experiments now referred to as the [Milgram Obedience Experiments](#).

The setting is simple, Subject A is told to conduct a memory test on Subject B, and administer electric shocks when he makes mistakes. Of course, Subject B does not exist, and the electric shocks are not real. Instead, actors would cry, ask for help or pretend to be unconscious, all the while Subject A would be encouraged to carry on administering the shocks.

The vast majority of subjects carried on with the test and gave the shocks, despite the distress of

“Subject B”.

The Conclusion: In his [paper on this experiment](#) Stanley Milgram coined the term “diffusion of responsibility”, describing the psychological process by which a person can excuse or justify doing harm to someone if they believe it’s not really their fault, they won’t be held accountable, or they do not have a choice.

The Application: Almost literally endless. All institutions can use this phenomenon to pressure people into acting against their own moral code. The army, the police, hospital staff – wherever there is a hierarchy or perceived authority, people will fall victim to the diffusion of their own responsibility.

NOTE: They made a decent film about Milgram, and the backlash his experiments caused called [Experimenter](#). In recent years there has been a major pushback on this experiment, with [articles in the MSM](#) attacking the findings and methodology and new “researchers” claiming *“it does not prove what you think it does.”*

2. THE STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT

The Experiment: Only slightly less famous than Milgram’s work is Philip Zimbardo’s Prison Experiment, carried out at Stanford University in 1971. The experiment set up a mock-prison for a week, with one group of subjects designated “guards” and the other “prisoners”.

Both sides were provided uniforms, and prisoners were given a number. The guards were ordered to only ever address prisoners by their number, not their name.

There were a number of other rules and procedures, detailed [here](#).

In brief, over the course of the week, guards became increasingly sadistic, dealing out punishments to disobedient prisoners and rewarding “good prisoners” in order to try and divide them. Many of the prisoners simply took the abuse, and in-fighting began between “trouble makers” and “good prisoners”.

Though technically not an “experiment” in the purest sense (there was no hypothesis to test, and no control group), and perhaps impacted by [“demand characteristics”](#), the study does reveal interesting patterns of behaviour in its subjects.

The Conclusion: Prison guards became sadistic. Prisoners became obedient. All this despite no real laws being broken, no real legal authority, and no real requirement to stay. If you give people power and dehumanise those below them, they will become sadistic. If you put people in prison they will act like they are in prison.

In short, people will act the way they are treated.

The Application: Again, endless. We’ve seen it all through Covid, if you start treating people a certain way, the majority will go along with it and blame the minority who refuse to cooperate. Meanwhile, police forces around the world were suddenly granted new powers, and promptly abused them because the maskless and unvaxxed had been dehumanised in their eyes. Those reactions were engineered, not accidental.

3. THE ASCH EXPERIMENT

The Experiment: Another experiment in conformity, not as brutal as Milgram or Zimbardo, but perhaps more unsettling in its findings.

First conducted by Solomon Asch in the 1950s, the setup is a simple one. You put together a panel of subjects, one real subject and a handful of fake subjects.

One by one the subjects are asked a series of multiple-choice questions to which the answer is always obvious, and *all* the fake subjects will get *every answer wrong*. The question is whether or not the real subject will maintain his own correct answer, or begin to conform with the group.

The Conclusion: While most people maintained their right answers, the “error rate” in the experiment group was 37% versus less than 1% in the control group. Meaning 36% of subjects eventually began to change their answers to align with the consensus, even though they knew they were wrong.

Around one-third of people will either pretend to change their minds for the sake of conformity or, more alarmingly, will actually alter their beliefs if they find themselves in the minority.

The Application: Staged or invented polls, falsified vote counts in elections, bot accounts on social media, astroturfing campaigns. Media headlines proclaiming “*everyone knows X*” or “*only 1% of people think Y*”.

There are a great many tools you can use in order to create the impression of a fake “consensus”, a manufactured “majority”.

NOTE: The experiment has been done a million times in dozens of variations, but perhaps the most interesting finding is that putting *just one other person* in the panel who agrees with the test subject seemed to reduce conformity by 87%. Essentially, people hate being a lone voice but will tolerate being in the minority if they have some support. Good to know.

4. FESTINGER’S COGNITIVE DISSONANCE EXPERIMENT

The Experiment: The least well-known experiment on the list, but in some ways the most fascinating. In 1954 Leon Festinger created an experiment to evaluate the phenomenon of cognitive dissonance, his setup was again quite simple.

A subject is given a repetitive and dull physical task to do (originally turning wooden pegs, but other variations use other tasks).

After the task is complete, the subject is instructed to go and prepare the next subject (actually a lab assistant) for the task, by lying and telling him/her how interesting the task was.

It’s at this point the subjects are divided into two groups, one group is offered \$20 to lie, the other only \$1.

This is the real experiment.

The Conclusion: After lying to the fake subjects, and being paid their money, the real subjects take part in a post-experiment interview and record their genuine thoughts on the task.

Interestingly, the 20-dollar generally told the truth, that they found the task dull and repetitive. While the one-dollar group, more often than not, claimed to have genuinely enjoyed the task.

This is cognitive dissonance in action.

Essentially, for the \$20 group, the money was a good reason to lie to their fellow test subject, and they could justify their own behaviour in their head. But, for the \$1 group, the meagreness of the reward made their dishonesty internally unjustifiable, so they had to unconsciously create their own justification by convincing themselves they weren't lying at all.

In summary, if you offer people a small reward for doing something, they will pretend to enjoy it, or be otherwise invested, to justify only making a small profit.

The Application: Casinos, computer games and other interactive media use this principle all the time, offering players very little pay off knowing they will convince themselves they are enjoying playing. Big corporations and employers can likewise rely on this phenomenon to keep wages down, knowing that low paid workers have a psychological mechanism that may convince them they enjoy their jobs.

NOTE: A variation on this experiment introduces a third group, who are paid nothing to lie. This group is not affected by cognitive dissonance, and will honestly appraise the task just as the well-paid group do.

5. THE MONKEY LADDER

The Experiment: Now this is a somewhat controversial addition to the list, but we'll get to that later. It's a very famous experiment you've probably heard cited dozens of times.

In the 1960s scientists at Harvard put five monkeys in a cage with a stepladder in the middle. Atop the stepladder is a bunch of bananas, however each time a monkey tries to climb the ladder they are all sprayed with ice-cold water. Eventually, the monkeys learn to avoid the ladder.

Then one monkey is removed and a new monkey is introduced. He naturally goes straight for the ladder and is set upon by the other four monkeys.

Then a second monkey is removed, and another new monkey is introduced. He naturally goes straight for the ladder and is set upon by the other four monkeys...*including the one who was never sprayed.*

They continue to replace each monkey in turn, until no monkeys are present who were ever sprayed with water, and yet they all refuse to go near the stairs and prevent all the new monkeys from doing so.

Now, the obvious conclusion here is that people can be conditioned to mindlessly follow rules they do not understand.

The only problem with that is that none of this ever happened.

Yes, that's the controversy I mentioned earlier. Despite being easily found on every corner of the internet, despite magazine articles explaining it and animations recounting it...it never happened. The experiment appears to be [entirely apocryphal](#).

No ladder, no monkeys, no cold water.

So while this supposed experiment doesn't actually teach us about herd mentality, it does explain the modern world, because it shows us how easily a myth can be worked into a reality through sheer dint of repetition.

BONUS: MONKEY LADDER REDUX

That's right, it doesn't stop there, there's another twist.

National Geographic did actually recreate the fictional monkey ladder experiment using people:

One subject walks into a doctor's waiting room filled with fake patients. When a bell sounds, all the fake patients stand up for a second and then retake their seats.

After this process repeats a few times, the fake patients are slowly removed one-by-one until only the subject of the experiment remains. Then secondary real subjects are introduced one at a time.

The experiment seeks to answer the following questions:

- a) Will the original subject stand up at the bell without knowing why?
- b) Will they will continue to stand up when they are alone in the room?
- c) Will they then teach this behaviour to the new subjects?

The answer to all three appears to be "yes".

Now, while far less scientific than the other four experiments, I include this here for a very specific reason. The above video of the experiment doesn't just record the conforming behaviour but describes it as possibly beneficial. Adding that herd behaviour saves lives in the wild and is "how we learn to socialise".

A very interesting take, don't you think?

So, while the *fake* monkey experiment that never happened was used to teach us about the perils of herd mentality, its nonexistence actually teaches us about the perils of non-primary sources and the group consciousness's ability to confabulate.

Meanwhile, the *real* monkey experiment is used to sell us the idea that herd mentality does exist but is potentially a good thing. Raising the possibility the whole thing could have been staged, simply to promote conformity.

...Isn't the world a strange and confusing place?

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So, there they are. Five of the most critical pieces of psychological research ever done, hopefully going forward nobody will be left in the dark when these concepts or experiments are referenced.

But the point of this article is not to just make you, the reader, understand these experiments...it is also meant to remind you that *they* do.

The people in charge, the elite, the 1%, "The Party". The powers that be – or shouldn't be – whatever you want to call them.

They know these experiments. They have studied them. They've probably replicated them countless times on grand scales and in unethical ways we can barely imagine. Who knows exactly what takes place in the dank dark dungeons of the deep state?

Just remember, they know how the human mind works.

- They know they can make people do anything if they reassure them they won't be held responsible.
- They know that they can rely on people to abuse any power they're given, **OR** believe they are powerless if they're treated that way.
- They know that peer pressure will change a lot of people's minds even in the face of undeniable reality, especially if you make them feel completely alone.
- They know that if you offer people only a small reward for completing a task, they will make up their own psychological justification for taking it.
- They know that people will mindlessly do whatever everyone else is doing without ever asking for a reason.
- And they know that people will happily believe something that never happened if it is repeated often enough.

They know all of this. And they use that knowledge all the time – **All. The. Time.**

Every commercial you see, every article you read, every movie they release, every item on the news, every "viral" social media post, every trending hashtag.

Every war. Every pandemic. Every headline.

All of them are constructed with these principles in mind to elicit specific emotional reactions that steer your behaviour and beliefs. That's how the media works, not to inform you, not to entertain you...but to control you.

And they have it down to a science. Always remember that.