

Thinking about Social Phenomena

Constructing Puzzles



Lecture dt. Feb 6, 2020

From last lecture

What are norms?

Set of shared values; socially enforced expectations

Moral norms: personal conscience; (mostly) unconditional

Social norms: socially acceptable; conditional

How are norms different from rules?

Consequences of action are uncertain

Norms: the good, the puzzling, the pointless,
and the harmful



Norms: the good, the pointless, and the harmful



What happens to norm violators?

Informal punishment

Social norms trigger emotions of shame and contempt

- Induces shame in violator, contempt in observer
- Action tendency of observer: avoidance; at worst, murder
- Action tendency of violator: isolation; at worst, suicide

Norms of hierarchy

Public Announcement

**WE WILL PAY YOU \$4.00 FOR
ONE HOUR OF YOUR TIME**

Persons Needed for a Study of Memory

*We will pay five hundred New Haven men to help us complete a scientific study of memory and learning. The study is being done at Yale University.

*Each person who participates will be paid \$4.00 (plus 50¢ carfare) for approximately 1 hour's time. We need you for only one hour; there are no further obligations. You may choose the time you would like to come (evenings, weekdays, or weekends).

*No special training, education, or experience is needed. We want:

Factory workers	Businessmen	Construction workers
City employees	Clerks	Salespeople
Laborers	Professional people	White-collar workers
Barbers	Telephone workers	Others

All persons must be between the ages of 20 and 50. High school and college students cannot be used.

*If you meet these qualifications, fill out the coupon below and mail it now to Professor Stanley Milgram, Department of Psychology, Yale University, New Haven. You will be notified later of the specific time and place of the study. We reserve the right to decline any application.

*You will be paid \$4.00 (plus 50¢ carfare) as soon as you arrive at the laboratory.

Milgram's Obedience Experiment, 1963

To what extent can people go to hurt others,
when commanded by authority

Norms of hierarchy



The Stanford Prison Experiment, 1971

Authoritarian “guards”, submissive “prisoners”

Norms of revenge



Seen as equivalent of organized law, where state is weak

- But more disruption than control (e.g. Middle East, South Asia)

Norms of honour



- Inter-caste, inter-religion marriages
- Disappointment upon birth of a girl
- Marrying beneath one's class
- Men earn; women have children

Next week

- What explains the existence of social norms?
- If many social norms are pointless and harmful, why don't we abandon them?

Monday's puzzle

I am a fair-skinned girl, who is good friends with a dark-skinned girl in my class. But I avoid her in front of other classmates.

Use emotions, actions, and social norms to explain the contradictory behaviour of the fair-skinned girl.

Fair skin on top of the social hierarchy; norm violation can induce contempt in observer, shame in violator

Readings

Albert Camus' *The Outsider* (on norm violation)

'The Real Lesson of the Stanford Prison Experiment', *The New Yorker*, June 12, 2015