

Conformity, deviance and diversity

Sajid Khan

Milgram's Experiment of Conformity

Stanley Milgram (1933-1984), a psychologist at Yale University carried out a **study of obedience** in 1963.

Imagine this: You are in a lab, participating in a study on learning. You're instructed to administer electric shocks to another person (actually an actor) whenever they give the wrong answer to a question.

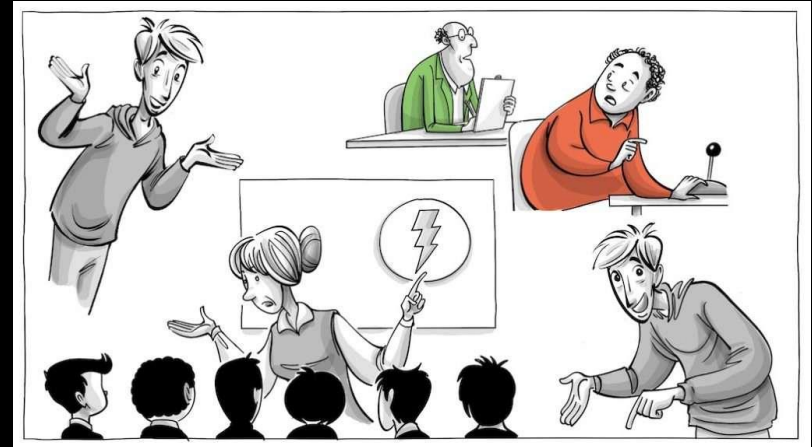
You are told that these shocks increase in intensity with each wrong answer. The "learner" in another room begin to scream and plead with you to stop as the shocks supposedly become more painful.

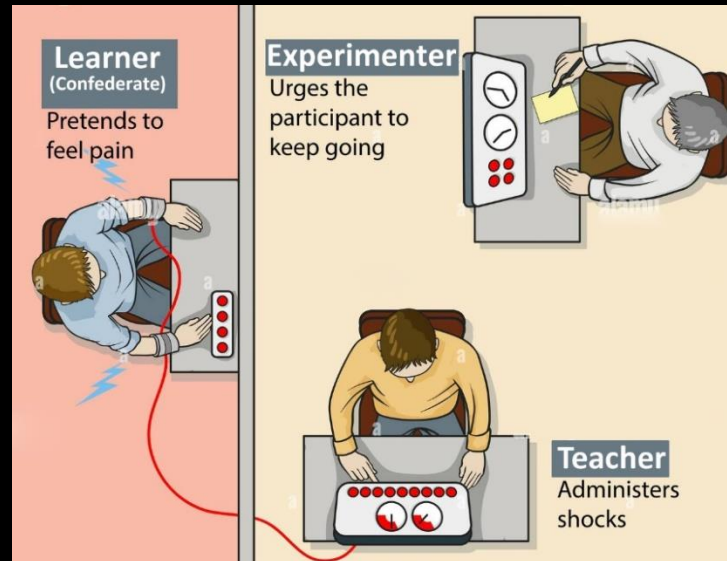
An authority figure in the room with you urges you to continue, insisting that the experiment must go on.

Milgram found that a disturbingly high percentage of participants continued to administer shocks, even when they believed they were causing significant harm to the "learner."

This experiment demonstrated the powerful influence of authority figures on our behavior. Even ordinary people can be compelled to obey orders, even when those orders go against their own moral compass.

Milgram's experiment showed how easily people can be influenced by authority, even when it means doing something they know is wrong. It highlights the importance of critical thinking and questioning authority when faced with potentially harmful situations.





There were four prods, and if one was not obeyed, then the experimenter (Mr. Williams) read out the next prod, and so on.

- Prod 1 : Please continue.
- Prod 2: The experiment requires you to continue.
- Prod 3 : It is absolutely essential that you continue.
- Prod 4 : You have no other choice but to continue.

The experiment found, unexpectedly, that a very high proportion of subjects would fully obey the instructions. 65% (two-thirds) of participants (i.e., teachers) continued to the highest level of 450 volts. All the participants continued to 300 volts. Milgram did more than one experiment – he carried out 18 variations of his study.

LIFE LESSONS FROM 'OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY

1. **Authority's Influence:** Obedience to authority can override personal morality, even when harmful.
2. **Gradual Escalation:** Unethical behavior often begins with small, seemingly innocuous steps.
3. **Personal Responsibility:** Individuals are accountable for their actions, even under pressure.
4. **Questioning Authority:** Critically evaluating the legitimacy of authority figures is crucial.
5. **Social Pressure:** Conformity can influence obedience; resisting peer pressure is vital.
6. **Awareness of Consequences:** Recognizing the impact of one's actions increases moral awareness.
7. **Power of Dissent:** Witnessing others resist authority empowers individuals to do the same.
8. **Individual Variation:** Responses to authority differ; acknowledging this is important.
9. **Societal Implications:** Milgram's work highlights the need for ethical frameworks and safeguards against the abuse of authority.

Merton's Strain Theory

Robert K. Merton (1910-2003) was an American sociologist (born in Philadelphia) who made great theoretical contributions to the field of criminology. He put forward 'strain theory' in 1938 to account for various acts of deviance.

This theory explains how the gap between societal goals and the means to achieve them can lead to deviance.

Society emphasizes certain goals (like wealth and success) but doesn't equally provide everyone with the legitimate means (like education and opportunity) to reach those goals.

Five Adaptations:

- **Conformity:** Accept goals and means (e.g., hardworking student)
- **Innovation:** Accept goals, reject means (e.g., criminal activity to get rich)
- **Ritualism:** Reject goals, accept means (e.g., going through the motions of work without ambition)
- **Retreatism:** Reject goals and means (e.g., drug addiction, homelessness)
- **Rebellion:** Reject goals and means, and create new ones (e.g., revolutionaries)

When individuals feel strain due to the mismatch between their aspirations and the available opportunities, they may resort to deviant behavior to achieve their goals or cope with the frustration.

Diversity at Workplace

- ✓ **Diversity** in the workplace refers to the acceptance and integration of people of different social backgrounds, cultures, abilities, and life experiences into a company.
- ✓ **Inclusion** means that every individual should have an equal opportunity to access education, resources, opportunities, decision making or any other treatment based on the qualities that make them unique.

A **diversified workforce** includes people with variety across a number of different categories: Gender, age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, political beliefs, language, educational backgrounds, skills and abilities and physical abilities and disabilities.

Why?

Shifting Demographics, increased creativity and innovation, broader range of skills and knowledge, decreased groupthink at work, global perspective and cultural competence, expands talent pool, increased employee engagement, retention and performance, enhanced company brand reputation and improved financial performance: Increased Profitability and Revenue

Statistics and Facts: Field of Engineering

Zipia's research statistics for US (2021):

- 13.7% of all engineers are women, while 86.3% are men.
- The average engineer age is 40 years old.
- The most common ethnicity of engineers is White (67.9%), followed by Asian (15.0%), Hispanic or Latino (9.1%) and Unknown (4.6%).

Diversity at Workplace (continued...)

World Economic Forum statistics for Pakistan (2020)

- Pakistan has one of the highest gender gaps in the world, and it is the third least performer in gender parity.
- Only 4.9% of engineering jobs are held by women in Pakistan.
- The numbers are particularly low in the energy sector with only 3% female engineers in the power transmission sector.
- The field of artificial intelligence has also seen few numbers of women engineers, with only 22% part of the workforce.

Strategies to improve diversity may include: Hiring practices, employee trainings, inclusive leadership and monitoring.

Challenges to diversity

- Unfair Prejudices and Discrimination
- Stereotypes
- Differing opinions
- Workplace Discrimination
- Lack of representation
- Communication Barriers
- Different Interpretations of Professional
- Etiquette

Self-fulfilling Prophecy

A self-fulfilling prophecy is a concept that describes a situation in which a belief or expectation influences a person's behavior in such a way that it brings about the expected outcome. In other words, a prediction or expectation, even if initially false, may become true because it leads people to act in ways that make the prediction come true.

Here's a simple example to illustrate the concept:

1. **Initial Belief:** Suppose someone believes that they will perform poorly in a job interview.
2. **Behavioral Impact:** Due to this belief, they may become nervous and insecure during the interview, which can affect their performance.
3. **Outcome:** The person may indeed perform poorly in the interview, not because they lacked the skills, but because their belief influenced their behavior.
4. **Reinforcement:** The poor performance in the interview may reinforce their initial belief, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy.

This concept is often discussed in the context of psychology and sociology, where the expectations or beliefs of individuals or groups can shape their behavior and ultimately influence outcomes. It highlights the powerful role that beliefs and perceptions can play in shaping our reality.

What is Social Mobility?

Social mobility refers to the movement of people from one social status or position to another.

For example:

a poor person may become rich: a bank peon may become bank officer,

a farmer may become a minister,

a petty businessman may become a big industrialist and so on.

At the same time a big businessman may become a bankrupt and

an employee may be demoted to lower position and so on

TYPES OF SOCIAL MOBILITY

Social mobility has two types: 1. Vertical Social Mobility, and 2. Horizontal Social Mobility.

Vertical Mobility refers to the movement of people from one status to another that involves **change in level of the status: class, occupation or power**.

For example, the movement of people from the poor class to the middle class, from the occupation of the labourers to that of the bank clerks, and organization is employee is promoted or demoted to a position.

Horizontal Mobility is a change in position without the change in status.

For example, an engineer working in a factory may resign from his job and join another factory as an engineer. Organization employees is assigned another charge in the same scale.

What is Social Stratification?

Social stratification refers to the division of society into groups or categories based on relative superiority and inferiority. It reflects the hierarchical arrangement of individuals in layers, where resources and rewards are distributed unequally. Those with greater access to resources occupy higher strata, while those with fewer resources represent lower layers. This division leads to social inequality, manifesting in unequal access to wealth, power, and prestige.

Throughout history, societies have classified individuals using systems such as kings and slaves, lords and serfs, rich and poor, landlords and laborers, and upper and lower castes.

Determinants of Social Stratification

Stratification is influenced by several factors, including:

- **Power:** The ability to impose one's will on others.
- **Prestige:** Respect and recognition granted by others.
- **Property:** Economic assets and forms of wealth.
- **Wealth:** The value of accumulated economic resources.
- **Occupation:** The social status associated with different professions.
- **Education:** The level and quality of education attained.
- **Caste:** Positions ascribed at birth.
- **Class:** Positions based on individual achievements.

Functions of Social Stratification

According to sociologists Kingsley Davis and Wilbert Moore (1945), social stratification serves essential functions:

- **Filling Important Positions:** All societies have critical tasks that must be performed. Stratification ensures these positions are filled.
- **Recognizing Role Importance:** Positions essential for societal survival are prioritized.
- **Rewarding Talent and Training:** Roles requiring specialized skills or extensive training are highly rewarded to attract qualified individuals.
- **Motivation for Productivity:** Unequal distribution of resources motivates individuals to work harder to achieve higher status and rewards.

While inequality may seem unfair, proponents argue it promotes societal efficiency by rewarding those who contribute more significantly to society. This system motivates individuals to pursue skills and careers that benefit society overall.

What is Groupthink?

It is a psychological phenomenon where the desire for group harmony overrides critical thinking and leads to poor decision-making.

- **Pressure for Conformity:** Individuals suppress their own doubts to avoid conflict or exclusion from the group.
- **Illusion of Invulnerability:** The group believes they are invincible and cannot make mistakes.
- **Collective Rationalization:** Group members justify their decisions, ignoring potential risks or alternative viewpoints.
- **Stereotyping of Outsiders:** Out-group members are seen as weak, evil, or stupid.
- **Self-Censorship:** Individuals refrain from expressing dissenting opinions to avoid disrupting group harmony.
- **Illusion of Unanimity:** A false sense that everyone agrees with the group's decision.
- **Mindguards:** Group members act as "gatekeepers," shielding the group from dissenting information or opinions.

Consequences of Groupthink:

- Leads to flawed decisions due to limited perspectives and inadequate risk assessment.
- Stifles innovation and prevents the exploration of alternative solutions.
- Can lead to unethical or harmful decisions due to a lack of critical evaluation.

Groupthink occurs when the desire for harmony and conformity within a group overrides the need for critical thinking and leads to flawed decision-making.

