



## Social Psychology Experiments <sup>[1]</sup>

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Social psychology experiments can explain how thoughts, feelings and behaviors are influenced by the presence of others.

Typically social psychology studies investigate how someone's behavior influences a groups behavior or internal states, such as attitude or self-concept.

### **Obedience to Authority**

*"I was only following orders"*

Legal defence by a Nazi leader at the Nuremberg trial following World War II

The aftermath of World War 2 made scientists investigate what to made people "follow orders" even though the orders were horrible. The Stanley Milgram Experiment <sup>[3]</sup> showed that also non-nazi populations would follow orders to harm other persons. It was not a German phenomenon as many thought.

### **Milgram's Lost Letter Experiment**

Classic social psychology experiments are widely used to expose the key elements of aggressive behavior, prejudice and stereotyping. Social group prejudice is manifested in people's unfavorable attitudes towards a particular social group. Stanley Milgram's Lost Letter Experiment <sup>[4]</sup> further explains this.

### **Obedience to a Role - Dehumanization**

The Abu Ghraib prison-episode was yet another example on the power of predefined roles. The Stanford Prison Experiment <sup>[5]</sup> by Philip Zimbardo, demonstrated the powerful effect our perception of expectations in roles have.

### **Conformity**

Solomon Asch wanted to test how much people are influenced by others opinions in the Asch Conformity Experiment <sup>[6]</sup>.

### **Observational Role Learning**

Behaviorists ruled psychology for a long time. They focused on how individuals learn by trying and failing. Albert Bandura thought that humans are much more than "learning machines". He thought that we learn from role models, initiating the (bandura) social cognitive theory. It all started with the Bobo Doll Experiment [7].

## Helping Behavior - Good Samaritan

Knowing the story of the Good Samaritan makes you wonder what made the Samaritan help the stranger, and why did he not get help from the priest or the Levite? The Good Samaritan Experiment [8] explores causes of not showing helping behavior or altruism.

## Cognitive Dissonance Experiment

The Cognitive Dissonance Experiment [9] by Leon Festinger assumes that people hold many different cognitions about their world and tests what happens when the cognitions do not fit. See also the more in depth article about the Cognitive Dissonance Experiment [10].

## Bystander Effect

The Bystander Apathy Experiment [11] was inspired and motivated to conduct this experiment from the highly publicised murder of Kitty Genovese in the same year.

## Groups and Influence On Opinion

Sherif's classic social psychology experiment named Robbers Cave Experiment [12] dealt with in-group relations, out-group relations and intergroup relations.

The Social Judgment Experiment [13] was designed to explore the internal processes of an individual's judgment and intergroup discrimination [14], how little it takes for people to form into groups, and the degree to which people within a group tend to favour the in-group and discriminate the out-group.

## Halo Effect

The Halo Effect [15] was demonstrated by Nisbett and Wilson's experiment. It fits the situation of Hollywood celebrities where people readily assume that since these people are physically attractive, it also follows that they are intelligent, friendly, and display good judgment as well. This also greatly applies to other well-known people such as politicians.

## Wegner's Dream Rebound Experiment

According to studies, thoughts suppressed may resurface or manifest themselves in the future in the form of dreams. Psychologist Daniel M. Wegner proves this in his experiment on effects of thought suppression [16].

## False Consensus

Everyone's got their own biases in each and every occasion, even when estimating other people behaviors and the respective causes. One of these is called the false consensus bias. Psychologist Professor Lee Ross conducted studies on setting out to show how false consensus effect

[17] operates.

## **Interpersonal Bargaining**

Bargaining is one of the many activities we usually engage in without even realizing it. The Moran Deutsch and Robert Krauss Experiment [18] investigated two central factors in bargaining, namely how we communicate with each other and the use of threats.

## **Understand and Belief**

Daniel Gilbert together with his colleagues put to test both Rene Descartes' and Baruch Spinoza's beliefs on whether belief [19] is automatic or is a separate process that follows understanding. This argument has long been standing for at least 400 years before it was finally settled.

## **Self-Deception**

People lie all the time even to themselves and surprisingly, it does work! This is the finding of the Quattrone and Tversky Experiment [20] that was published in the Journal of Personality and Psychology.

## **Overjustification Effect**

The overjustification effect [21] happens when an external incentive like a reward, decreases a person's intrinsic motivation to perform a particular task. Lepper, Greene and Nisbett confirmed this in their field experiment in a nursery school.

## **Chameleon Effect**

Also called unintentional mirroring, the chameleon effect [22] usually applies to people who are getting along so well, each tend to mimic each other's body posture, hand gestures, speaking accents, among others. This was confirmed by the Chartrand and Bargh experiments.

## **Confirmation Bias**

Confirmation bias [23] is also known as selective collection of evidence. It is considered as an effect of information processing where people behaves to as to make their expectations come true. People tend to favor information that confirms their preconceptions or hypotheses independently of the information's truthness or falsity.

## **Choice Blindness**

Choice blindness [24] refers to ways in which people are blind to their own choices and preferences. Lars Hall and Peter Johansson further explain this phenomenon in their study.

## **Stereotypes**

The Clark Doll Test [25] illustrates the ill effects of stereotyping and racial segregation in America. It illustrated the damage caused by systematic segregation and racism on children's self-perception at the young age of five.

## Selective Group Perception

In selective group perception, people tend to actively filter information they think is irrelevant. This effect is demonstrated in Hastorf and Cantril's Case Study: They Saw a Game [26].

## Changing Behaviour When Being Studied

The Hawthorne Effect [27] is the process where human subjects of an experiment change their behavior, simply because they are being studied. This is one of the hardest inbuilt biases to eliminate or factor into the design.

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