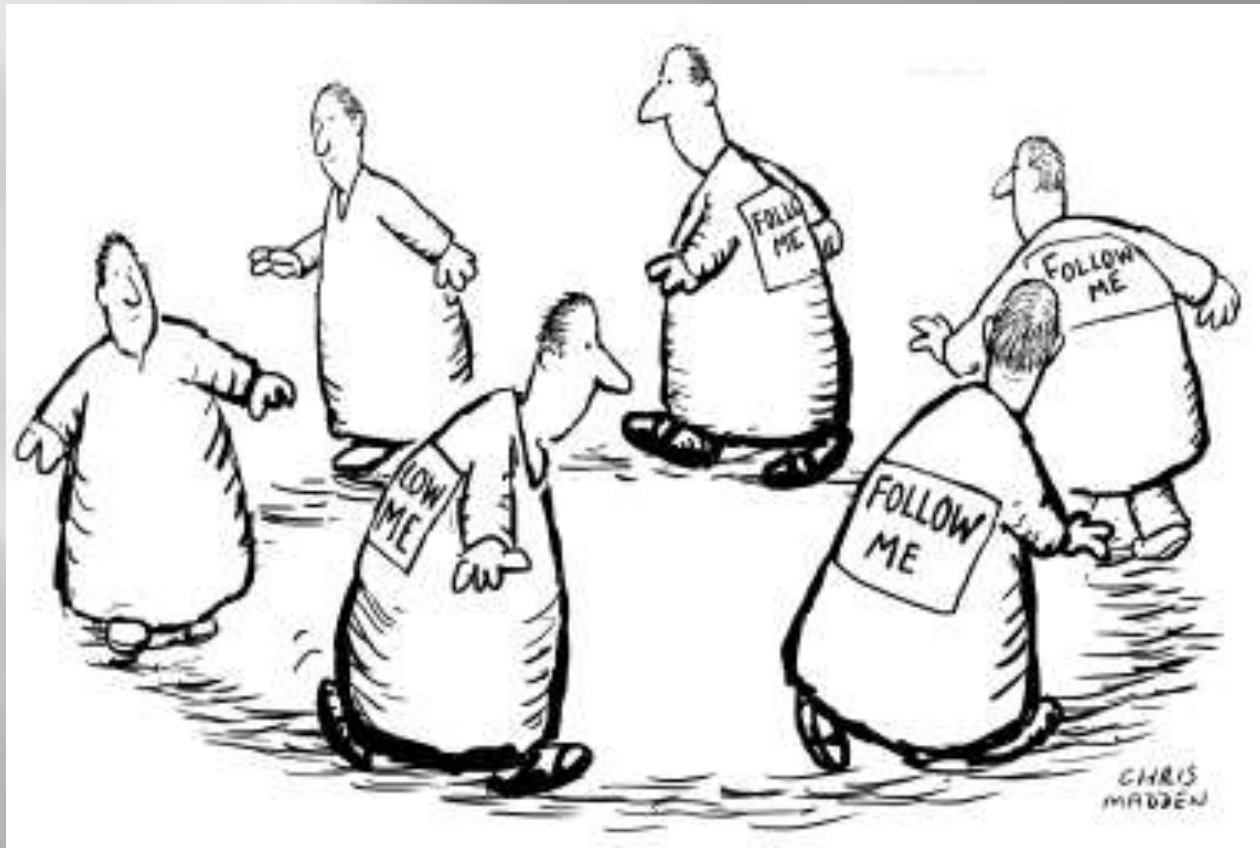


# In the grip of social influence



# Social psychology

$$B = f(P, E)$$

Behavior = function (Person, Environment)

# Historical context:

## How can „some“ people be so evil?



*Apathy at Stabbing  
of Queens Woman.  
Shocks Inspector*

By MARTIN GANSBERG

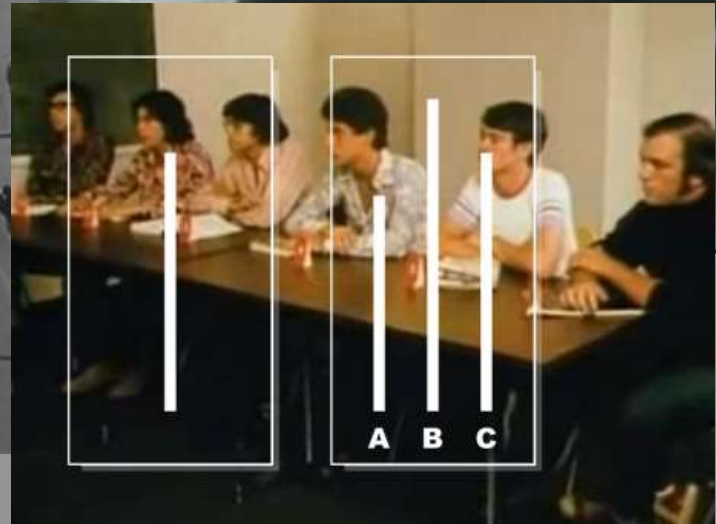
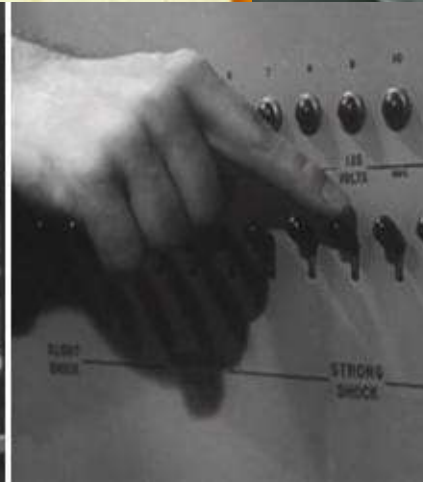
For more than half an hour



# Personality or situation...?



# „Golden era“ of social psychology (1950s-1970s)



# The Stanford Prison Experiment

Haney, C., Banks, C., & Zimbardo, P. (1973). Interpersonal dynamics in a simulated prison. *International Journal of Criminology & Penology*, 1, 69-97.

**Phillip Zimbardo:** *Is the dispositional hypothesis true?*



# The Stanford Prison Experiment

Haney, C., Banks, C., & Zimbardo, P. (1973). Interpersonal dynamics in a simulated prison. *International Journal of Criminology & Penology*, 1, 69-97.

- ▣ Participants chosen to be as “normal” and homogeneous as possible
- ▣ “Arrested” by the police
- ▣ Scheduled to spend 2 weeks in a simulated prison

# The Stanford Prison Experiment

Haney, C., Banks, C., & Zimbardo, P. (1973). Interpersonal dynamics in a simulated prison. *International Journal of Criminology & Penology*, 1, 69-97.





# The Stanford Prison Experiment

Haney, C., Banks, C., & Zimbardo, P. (1973). Interpersonal dynamics in a simulated prison. *International Journal of Criminology & Penology*, 1, 69-97.

- ▣ Participants chosen to be as “normal” and homogeneous as possible
- ▣ “Arrested” by the police
- ▣ Scheduled to spend 2 weeks in a simulated prison
- ▣ The experiment was stopped after 6 days because it “went too far”
- ▣ **Arguably the most famous “experiment” in psychology**

**Were the standards of a good scientific experiment met?**

# The SPE – the report says...

Haney, C., Banks, C., & Zimbardo, P. (1973). Interpersonal dynamics in a simulated prison. *International Journal of Criminology & Penology*, 1, 69-97.

- ▣ “Guards” asked to “*maintain the reasonable degree of order within the prison necessary for its effective functioning*”
- ▣ “Absence of specific hypotheses”
- ▣ Everybody was free to leave but “couldn’t” because of the identification with their role (“guards” enjoyed their position; “prisoners” accepted their position passively)
- ▣ “Guards” devised the techniques of oppression spontaneously, even though they “could have behaved in any way they liked”
- ▣ Four prisoners had to be released because of severe stress reactions

# The SPE – the report says...

Haney, C., Banks, C., & Zimbardo, P. (1973). Interpersonal dynamics in a simulated prison. *International Journal of Criminology & Penology*, 1, 69-97.

Zimbardo's interpretation of prisoners' behaviour:

- ▣ **Loss of personal identity** (deindividuation) = uniforms; numbers instead of names
- ▣ **Arbitrary control** leading to **learned helplessness**
- ▣ **Dependency** and **emasculatation**

# The even darker side of the SPE

TRUST ISSUES

## The Lifespan of a Lie

The most famous psychology study of all time was a sham. Why can't we escape the Stanford Prison Experiment?



Ben Blum [Follow](#)

Jun 7, 2018 · 29 min read ★

# The even darker side of the SPE

## Original recordings revealed + interviews with participants:

- ❑ Participants were actually told they were not allowed to leave.
- ❑ During the orientation meeting, the “guards” reminded that torture other than physical is permitted.
- ❑ Techniques of oppression devised by Zimbardo’s student assistant, whose project also inspired the study.
- ❑ Participants admitted they acted in ways they thought would please the experimenters (= the goal was to act this way).
- ❑ Famous “nervous breakdown” was actually simulated.

*“We cannot physically abuse or torture them,”* Zimbardo told them, in recordings first released a decade and a half after the experiment. *“We can create boredom. We can create a sense of frustration. We can create fear in them, to some degree... We have total power in the situation. They have none.”*

Once the simulation got underway, Jaffe explicitly corrected guards who weren't acting tough enough, *fostering exactly the pathological behavior that Zimbardo would later claim had arisen organically.* “The guards have to know that every guard is going to be what we call a tough guard,” Jaffe told one such guard. *“[H]opefully what will come out of this study is some very serious recommendations for reform... so that we can get on the media and into the press with it, and say ‘Now look at what this is really about.’ ... [T]ry and react as you picture the pigs reacting.”* Though most guards gave lackluster performances, some even going out of their way to do small favors for the prisoners, one in particular rose to the challenge: Dave Eshleman, whom prisoners nicknamed “John Wayne” for his Southern accent and inventive cruelty. But Eshleman, who had studied acting throughout high school and college, has always admitted that his accent was just as fake as Korpi's breakdown. His overarching goal, as he told me in an interview, was simply to help the experiment succeed. ... After the experiment ended, Zimbardo singled him out and thanked him. *“As I was walking down the hall,”* Eshleman recalled, *“he made it a point to come and let me know what a great job I'd done. I actually felt like I had accomplished something good because I had contributed in some way to the understanding of human nature.”*

**(Why) is such misreporting dangerous?**



# The BBC Prison Study

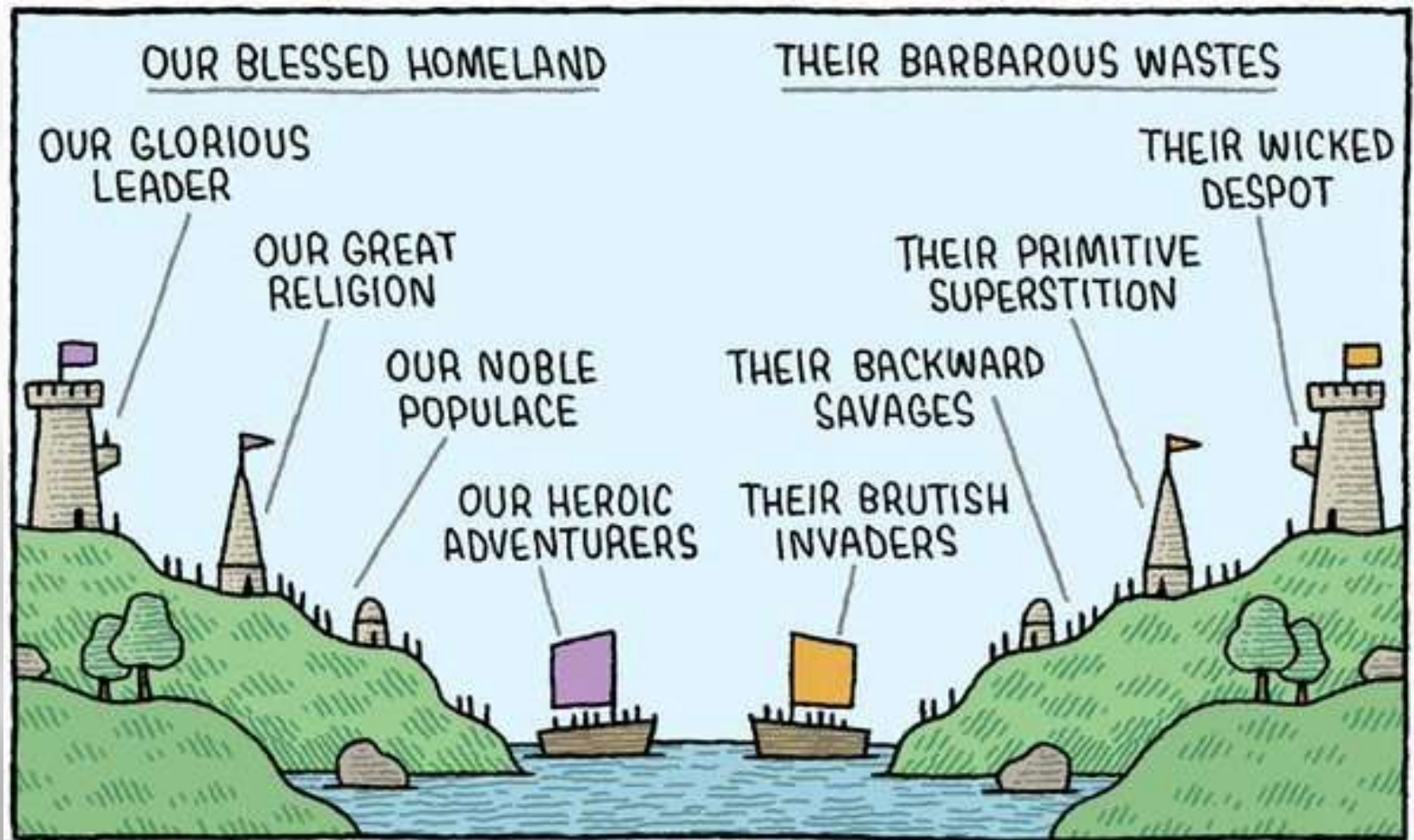
Reicher, S., & Haslam, S. A. (2006). Rethinking the psychology of tyranny: The BBC prison study. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 45(1), 1-40.

- ▣ Zimbardo's claim that people passively "slip" into roles not confirmed – guards passive and "powerless" in this study, initiative taken by prisoners
- ▣ **Social identity theory** – depends on group identification and success of the group
- ▣ However, this was a TV show... what does it mean?



**How do you become a villain?  
How do you become a victim?  
How does someone get  
bullied?**

# “Us & them” thining – how does it work?



TOM GAULD

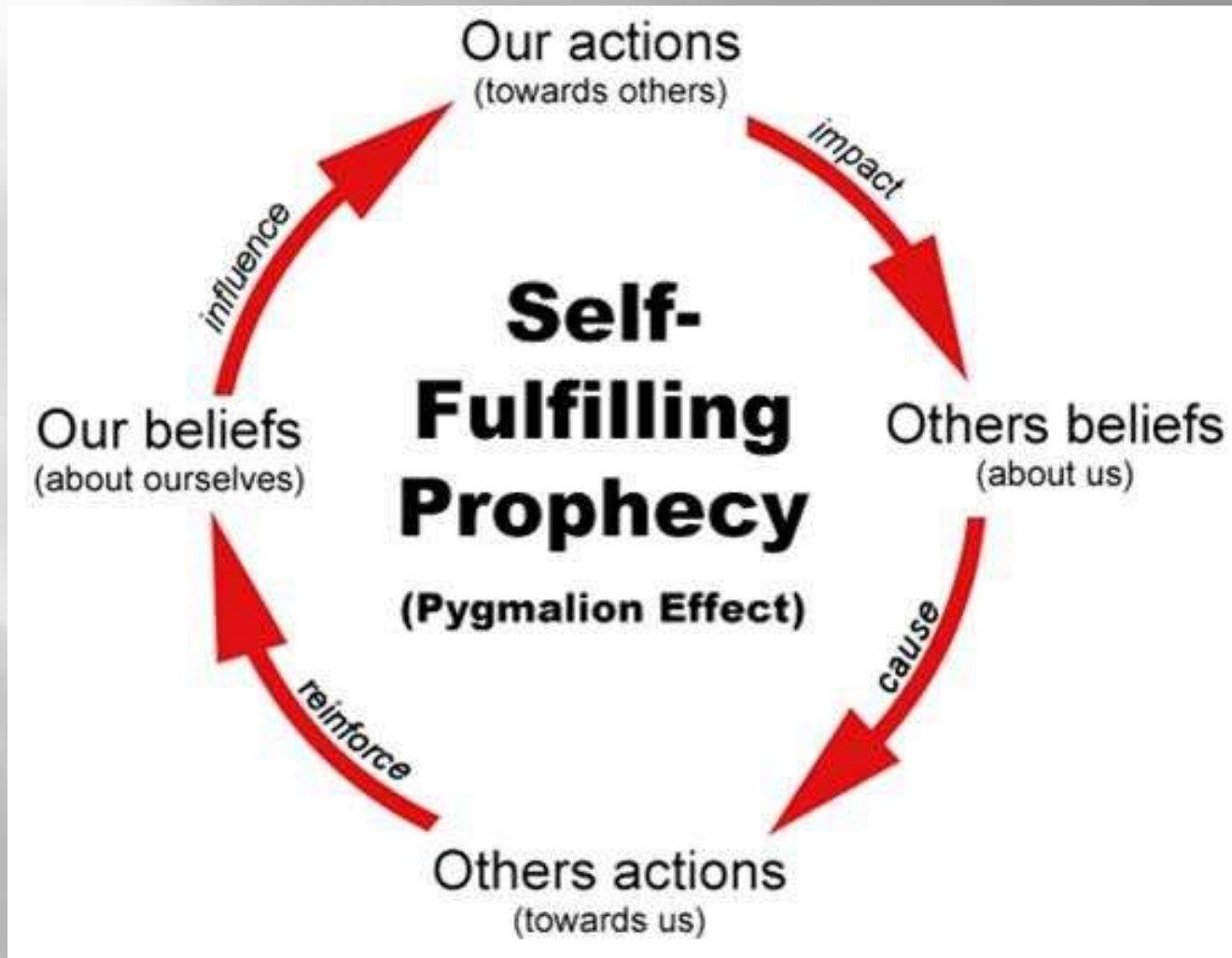
**Is stereotyping completely unfounded?**

**Are stereotypes unrelated to actual behaviour?**

# Self-fulfilling prophecy - self



# Self-fulfilling prophecy - others



**What made guards and prisoners in Zimbardo's experiment act as they did?**

# The Milgram experiments on obedience

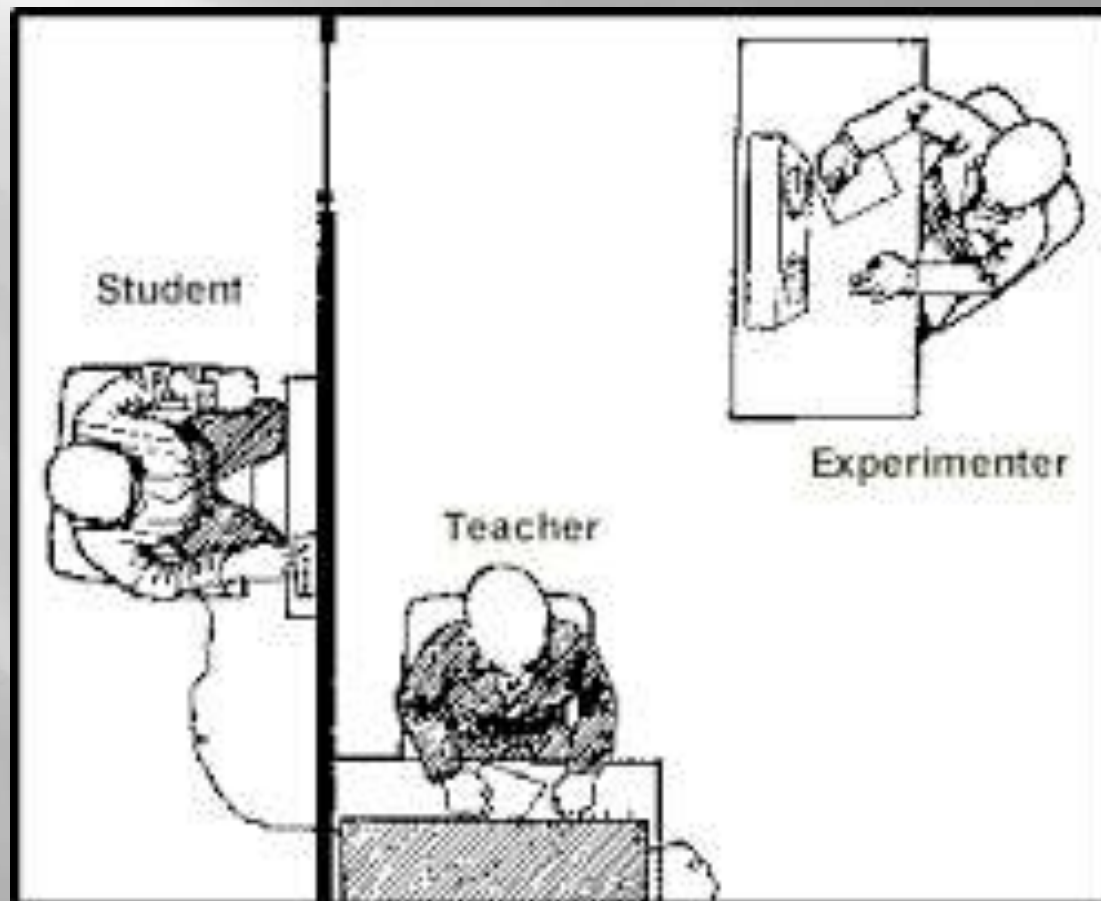
Milgram, S. (1963). Behavioral study of obedience. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67(4), 371-378.

**Stanley Milgram:** *How far will people go with their obedience to authority?*





# The Milgram experiments on obedience



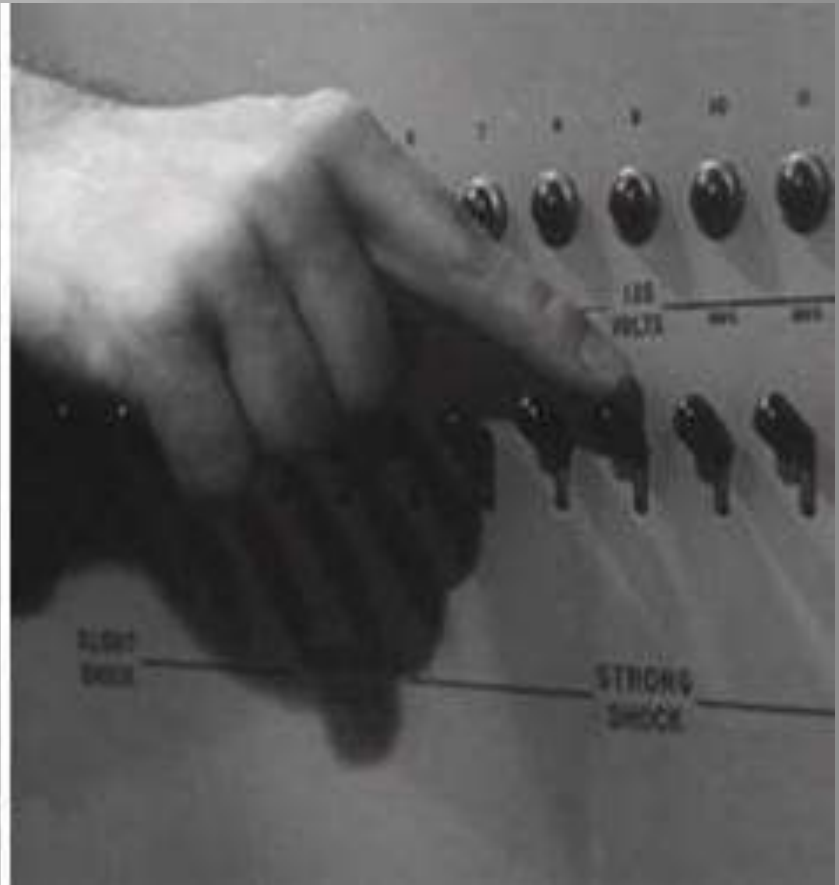
# The Milgram experiments on obedience



# The Milgram experiments on obedience



# The Milgram experiments on obedience



# The Milgram experiments on obedience

Milgram, S. (1963). Behavioral study of obedience. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 67(4), 371-378.

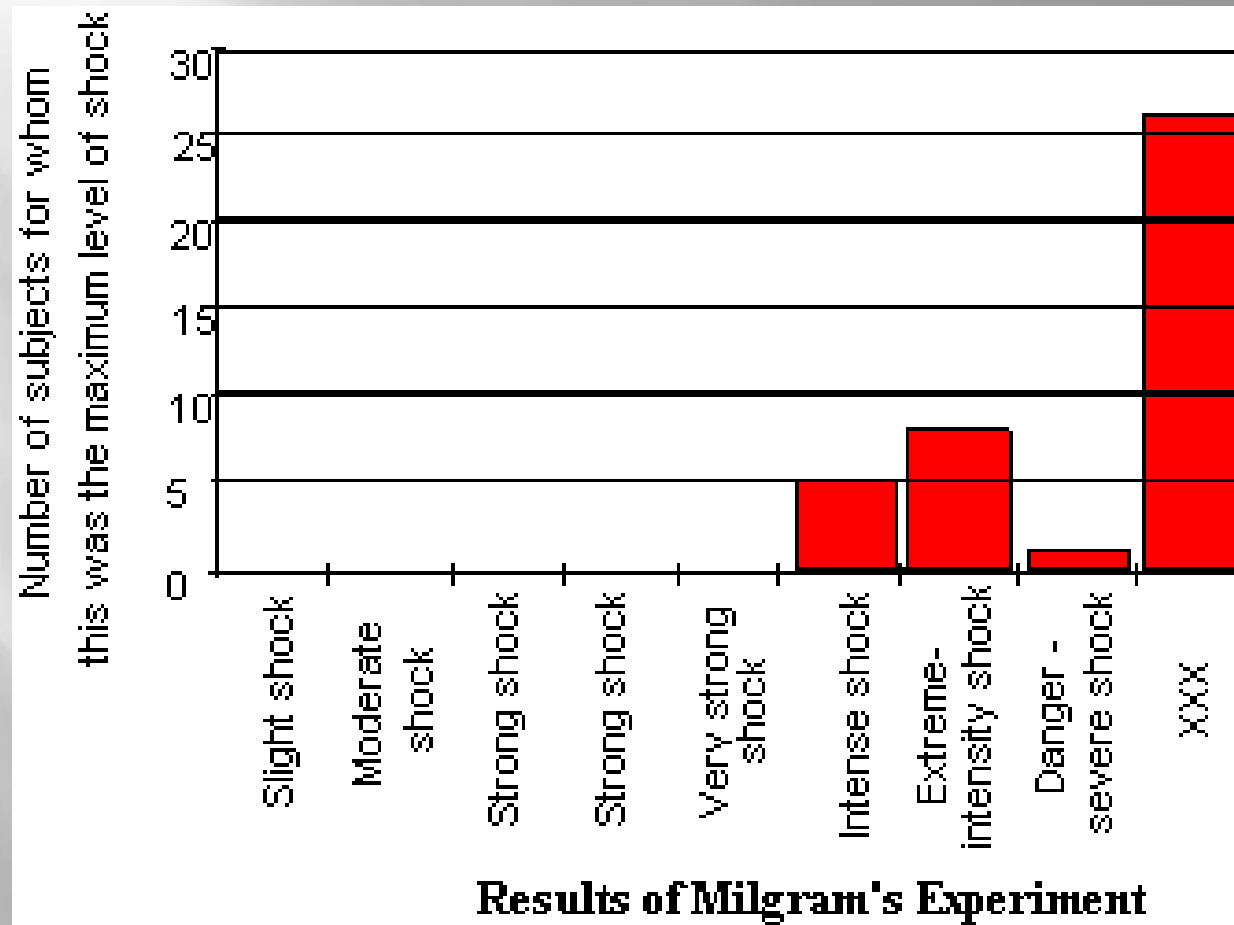
**The machine:** 30 V increasing all the way up to 450 V: "slight shock" → "moderate shock" → "danger: severe shock" → "XXX"

## Prods:

- ▣ *"Please continue."*
- ▣ *"The experiment requires that you continue."*
- ▣ *"It is absolutely essential that you continue."*
- ▣ *"You have no other choice, you must go on."*

**How many went beyond  
300V?**

# All went beyond 300V.



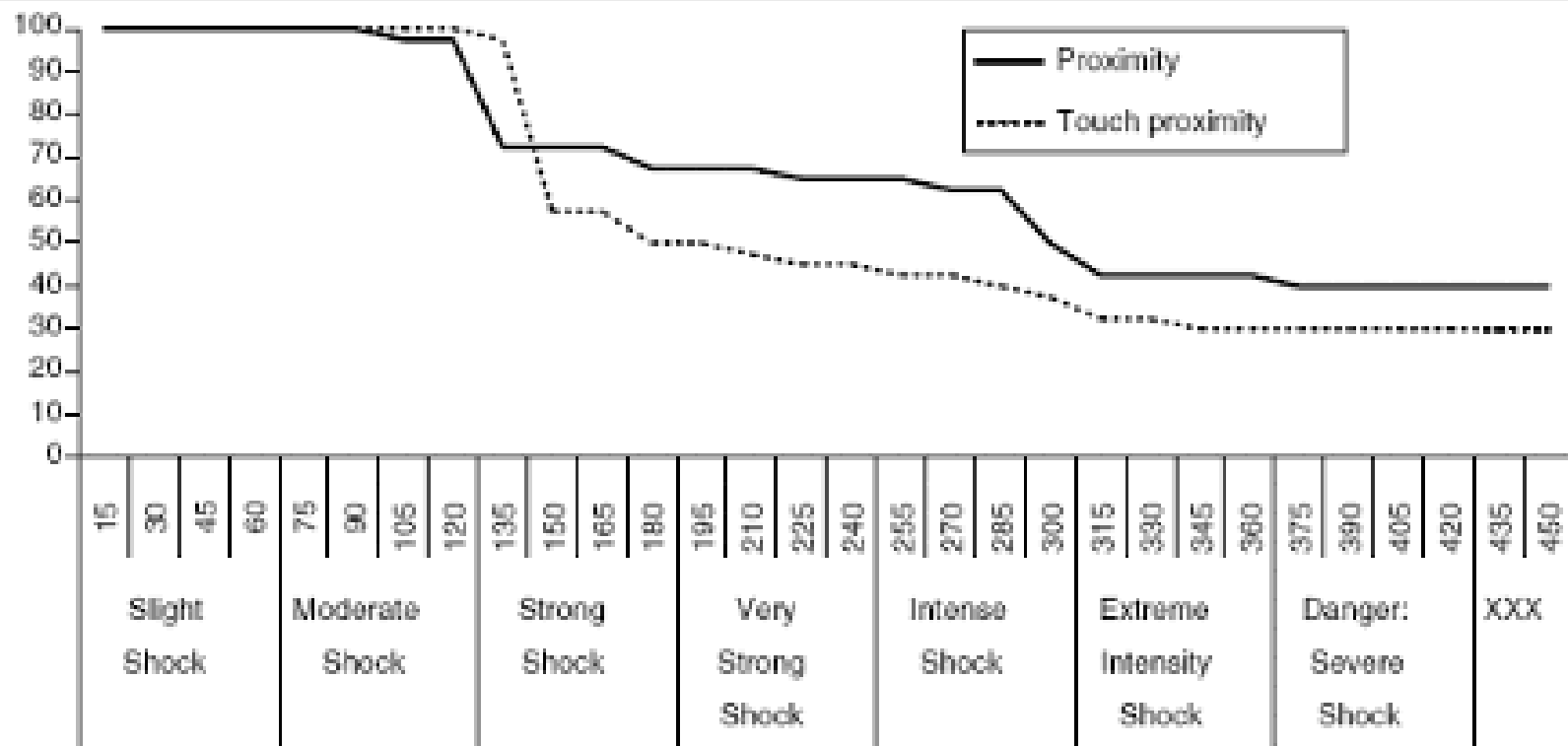
## FURTHER EXPERIMENTS - AUDIO:

- ▣ 75-135 volts: "Ugh!!!"
- ▣ 150 volts: "Ugh!!! Experimenter! That's all. Get me out of here. I told you I had heart trouble. My heart's starting to bother me now. Get me out of here, please. My heart's starting to bother me. I refuse to go on. Let me out."
- ▣ 165-255 volts: (Shouting) "Ugh!!! Let me out!"
- ▣ 270-285 volts (Screaming) "Let me out of here. Let me out of here. Let me out of here. Let me out. Do you hear? Let me out of here."
- ▣ 300-315 volts: (Screaming) "I absolutely refuse to answer any more. Get me out of here. You can't hold me here. Get me out. Get me out of here."
- ▣ 330 volts: (Intense and prolonged screaming) "Let me out of here. Let me out of here. My heart's bothering me. Let me out, I tell you. (Hysterically) Let me out of here. Let me out of here. You have no right to hold me here. Let me out! Let me out! Let me out! Let me out of here! Let me out. Let me out."
- ▣ 345-450 volts: (Silence)
- ▣ The experiment was terminated by the experimenter after 3 shocks at 450 volts



# Effects of proximity

% of participants reaching each level of voltage – proximity variants



Source: Milgram (1974)

**How would YOU react?**

# Problems with Milgram experiments

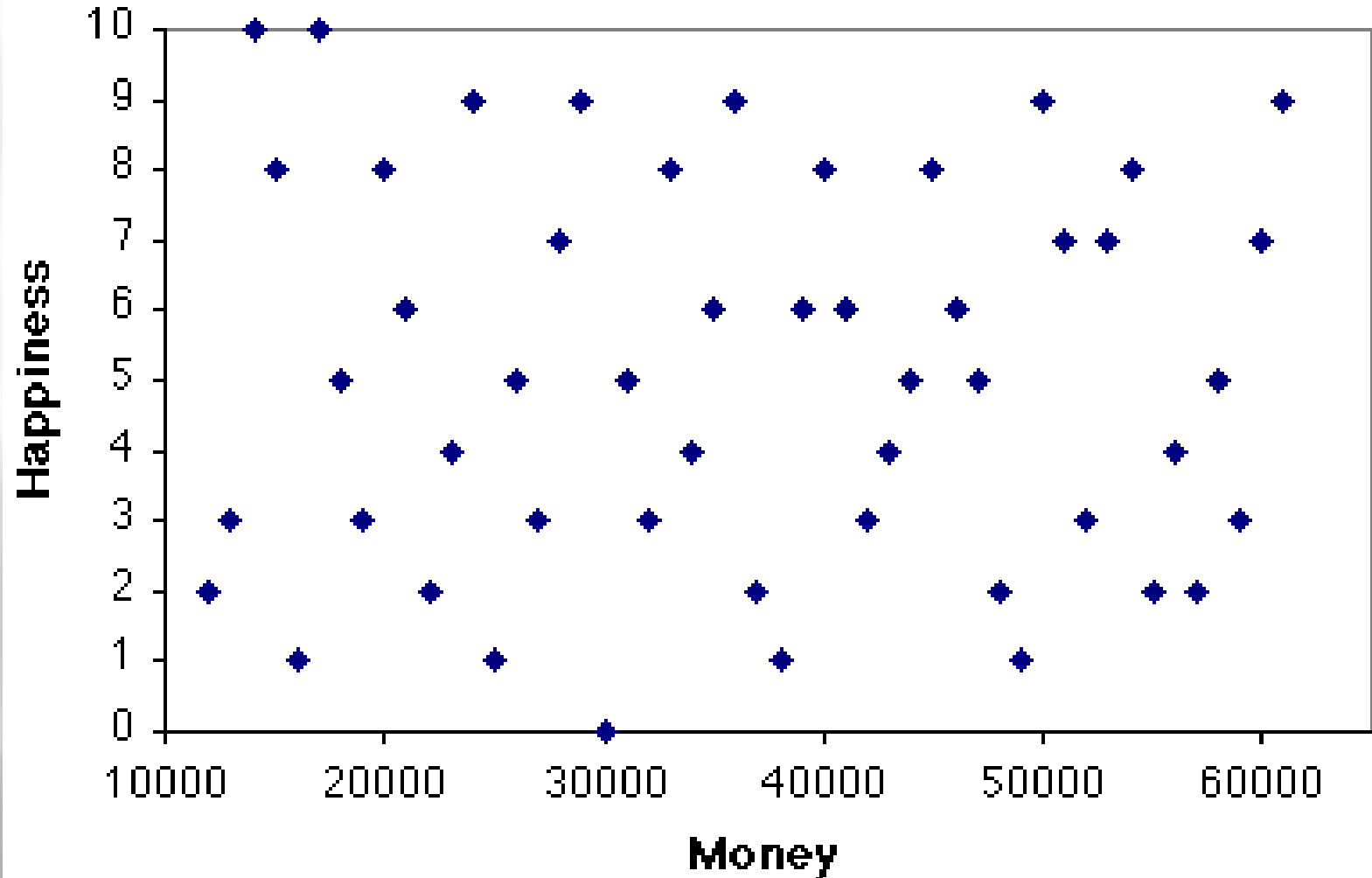
Original documents revealed + interviews with participants:

- ▣ **Experimenter bias:** Prodding was extended, did not follow protocol, and resembled bullying: *“The experimenter’s answers to the teacher’s queries reveal that the experimenter had defined his role as doing whatever was necessary to get the teacher to continue giving the shocks.”*
- ▣ **Serious ethical issues and selective reporting:** Participants not debriefed properly (despite reports claiming otherwise); “secret” unreported studies conducted (shocking a close friend/relative – 85% disobedience)
- ▣ **Underestimated failed manipulation:** Many of those who “went all the way” did not believe the electric shocks were real – **Milgram knew** but did not report.

**Why is selective reporting  
such a problem?**

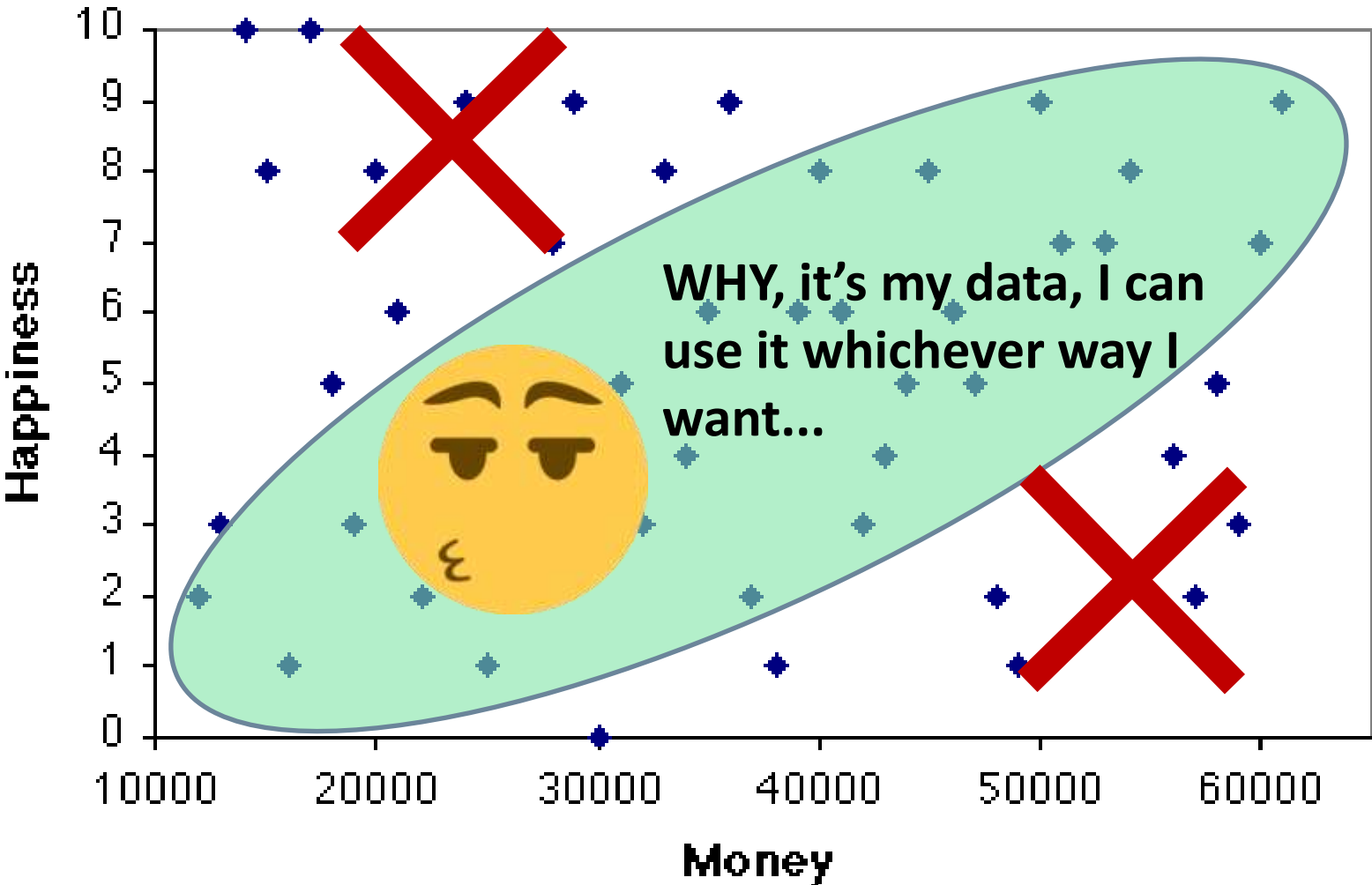
# Why is selecting data to support your conclusion bad?

$r = .00$



# Why is selecting data to support your conclusion bad?

$r = .70$



# Irrationality in science

- ▣ **Confirmation bias („Experimenter Effect“)** – *overstate evidence supporting my theory and neglecting evidence against my theory*
- ▣ **Congruence bias** – *looking for evidence to support my hypothesis rather than test alternative hypothesis*
- ▣ **Observer-expectancy effect** – *subconscious manipulation of experimental situation in order to achieve the desired effect*
- ▣ **Hindsight bias** – *modifying or creating hypotheses after results are known, „I knew it all along“ fallacy*
- ▣ **Availability heuristic** – *only considering “here-and-now evidence”, not the entire body of research*
- ▣ **Publication bias** – *non-significant results are seen as unimportant, hence unpublishable*

# “Good science”

*Mind the principles of inductive reasoning...*

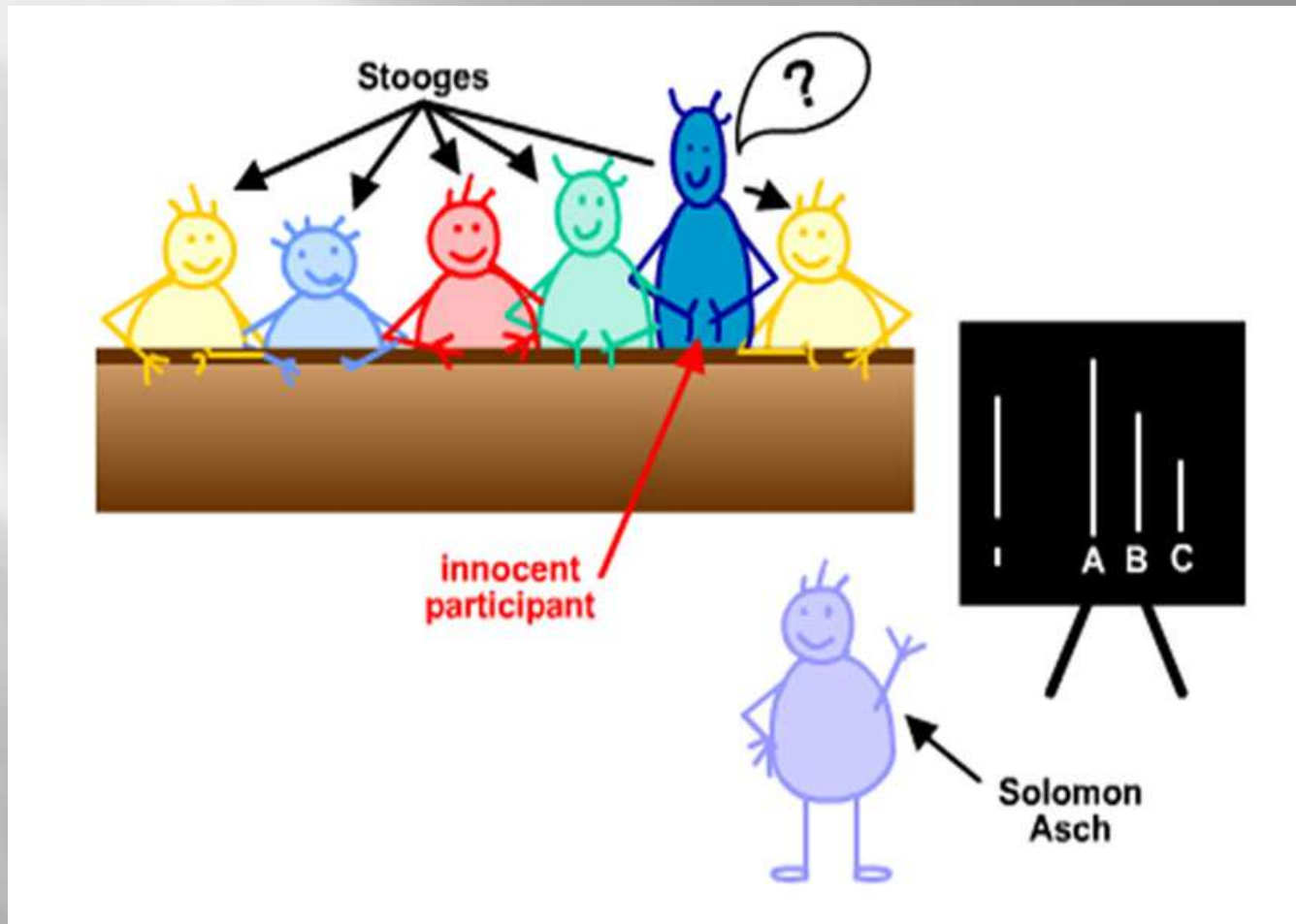
- ▣ One research study is **never enough** to draw conclusions.
- ▣ Hypotheses have to be formulated **before** conducting new research, should be based on previously well-established observations.
- ▣ Finding plausible explanations for what already happened is easy – **this is not science!!!** These explanations have to be tested as hypotheses, and alternative explanations have to be tested as well.
- ▣ **All** results (positive, negative and inconclusive) have to be reported.
- ▣ **No adjustments** in data or hypotheses can be made **post-hoc**.
- ▣ Theory has to be formulated very carefully so that there are **no logical errors** or unfounded assumptions.



**There are well-established,  
easily replicable social  
influence effects:**

# Asch's experiments on conformity

Asch, S. E. (1955). Opinions and social pressure. *Scientific American*, 193(5), 31-35.



# Asch's experiments on conformity

**Group influence increased with:**

- ▣ Larger group size (only up to 3 people)
- ▣ Subject started to conform from the beginning
- ▣ No other “dissident” in the group
- ▣ Partner suddenly joins the majority
- ▣ **Actual difference in line length...?**

# Experiments on the bystander effect



## *Apathy at Stabbing of Queens Woman. Shocks Inspector*

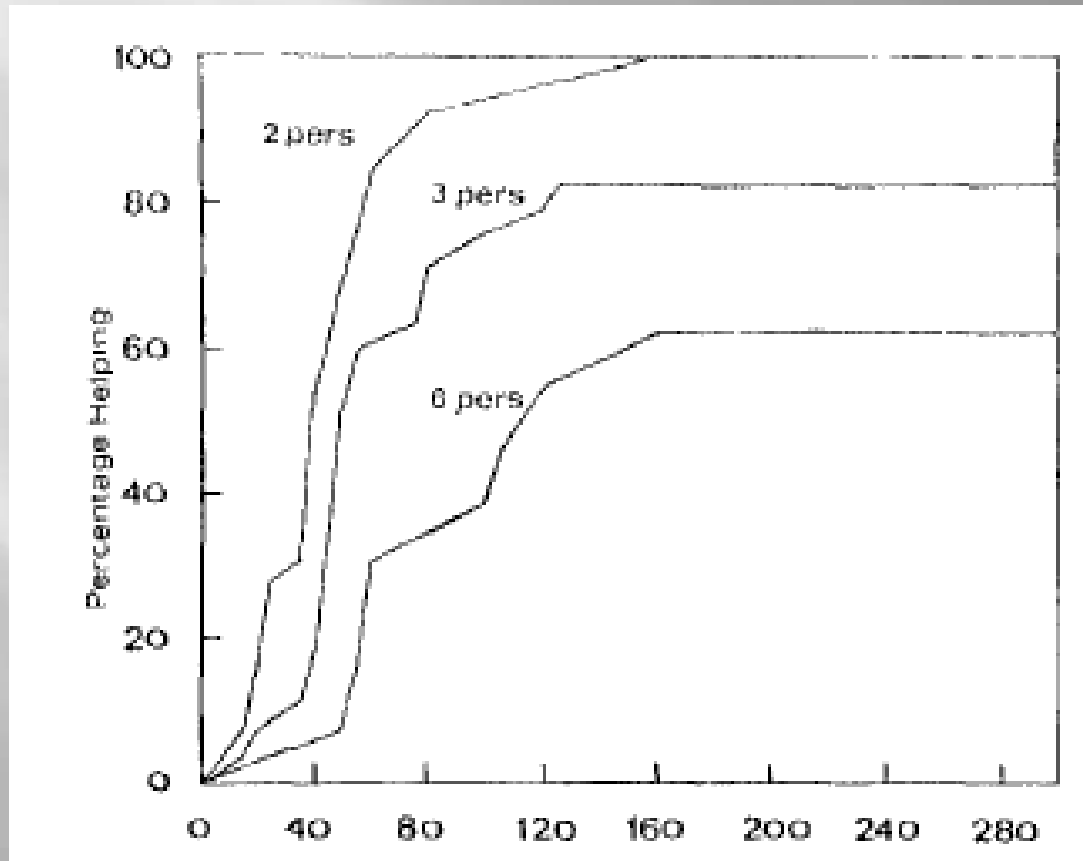
By **MARTIN GANSBERG**

For more than half an hour 38 respectable, law-abiding citizens in Queens watched a killer stalk and stab a woman in three separate attacks in Kew Gardens.

Twice the sound of their voices

# Experiments on the bystander effect

Darley, J. M., & Latané, B. (1968). Bystander intervention in emergencies: Diffusion of responsibility. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 8(4p1), 377-383.



# Experiments on the bystander effect

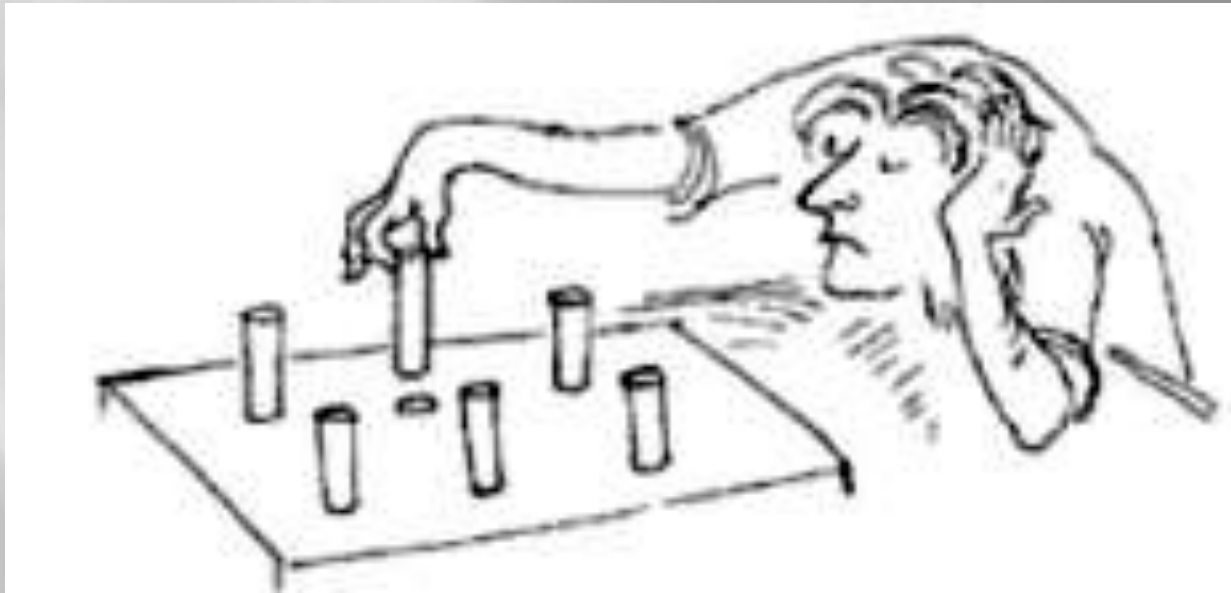
**Diffusion of responsibility** – expectation that help will come from elsewhere



**Are people aware of the  
diffusion of responsibility  
problem...?**

# “Why am I doing this...?”

- ▣ Festinger & Carlsmith, 1959





# “Why am I doing this...?”

Festinger, L., & Carlsmith, J. M. (1959). Cognitive consequences of forced compliance. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 58(2), 203-210.

## Group A:

- ▣ Asked to do a tedious task for more than 1 h
- ▣ Asked to do a „favour“ for the experimenter:
- ▣ Persuade next participant that the task was interesting

## Group B:

- ▣ Asked to do a tedious task for more than 1 h
- ▣ Asked to do a „favour“ for the experimenter:
- ▣ Persuade next participant that the task was interesting

# “Why am I doing this...?”

Festinger, L., & Carlsmith, J. M. (1959). Cognitive consequences of forced compliance. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 58(2), 203-210.

## Group A:

- ▣ Asked to do a tedious task for more than 1 h
- ▣ Asked to do a „favour“ for the experimenter:
- ▣ Persuade next participant that the task was interesting
- ▣ **Paid \$ 20**




## Group B:

- ▣ Asked to do a tedious task for more than 1 h
- ▣ Asked to do a „favour“ for the experimenter:
- ▣ Persuade next participant that the task was interesting
- ▣ **Paid \$ 1**

# How much is your frustration worth?

Festinger, L., & Carlsmith, J. M. (1959). Cognitive consequences of forced compliance. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 58(2), 203-210.

## Ratings of task after payment:

	Enjoyable? Again?
Control Group	
\$ 20	
\$ 1	

# How much is your frustration worth?

Aronson, E., & Mills, J. (1959). The effect of severity of initiation on liking for a group. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 59(2), 177-181.

## Group A:

- ❑ Ready to join a discussion group
- ❑ Initiation: **Reading educational sex-related text**
- ❑ Asked to rate conversation of the group they joined




## Group B:

- ❑ Ready to join a discussion group
- ❑ Initiation: **Reading embarrassing pornographic text**
- ❑ Asked to rate conversation of the group they joined

# How much is your frustration worth?

Aronson, E., & Mills, J. (1959). The effect of severity of initiation on liking for a group. *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 59(2), 177-181.

**Ratings of recorded (boring) conversation:**

	Interesting discussion?
Control Group	
Low embarrassment	
High embarrassment	

# Cognitive dissonance

- ▣ When our actions are in conflict (dissonance) with our beliefs, values, or primary motives we are inclined to change **either the belief or the behaviour**
- ▣ Which of these changes depends on **which one is easier to change** (e.g. we cannot change our past actions → we tend to change our belief)
- ▣ Other behaviours are difficult to change: bad habits, impulsive behaviour, conforming to group behaviour...

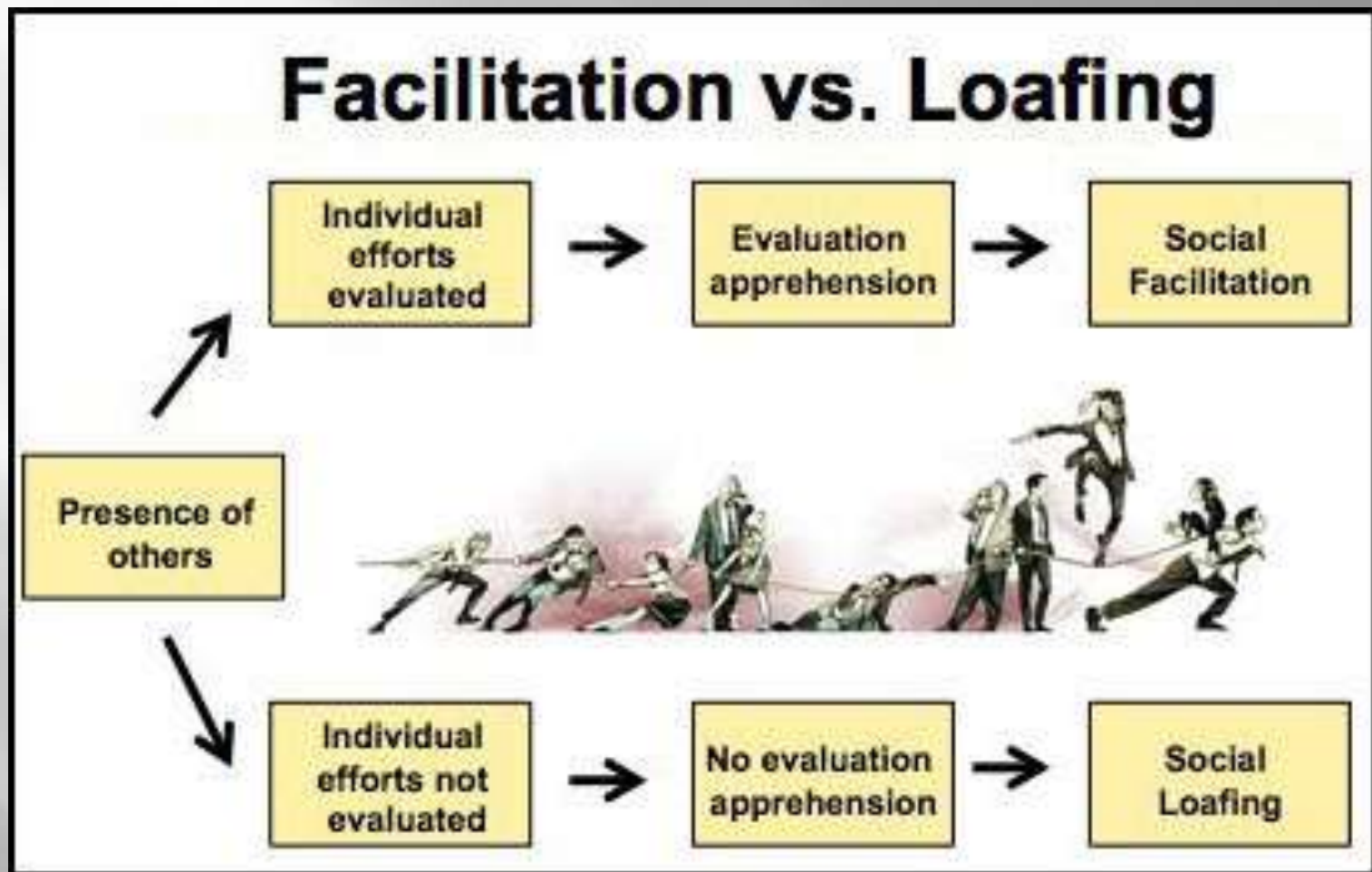
**Can the presence of others  
also influence our  
performance?**

# Less or more...?





# Social facilitation vs. social loafing



# Explanations

## Social loafing

- ▣ Situations of cooperation
- ▣ Coordination loss (partly)
- ▣ Motivation loss = believe my contribution is dispensable; my contribution is invisible
- ▣ Comparison with others

## Social facilitation

- ▣ Situations of coaction and competition
- ▣ Self-presentation
- ▣ Increased arousal
- ▣ Feedback – comparison
- ▣ **Negative** influence on people with low self-esteem and social anxiety

# Thank you!

