

The background features a central white diagonal band. To the left, a solid black silhouette of a hand is shown against a tan background. To the right, there are overlapping, semi-transparent geometric shapes in shades of orange and yellow. A large, light blue-grey shadow of a hand is visible behind the text.

Zimbardo and
Franco:
“The Banality of
Heroism”

Course Units



How do we know
what is real?



What makes us
who we are?



What forces shape
our world?



What makes us
happy?

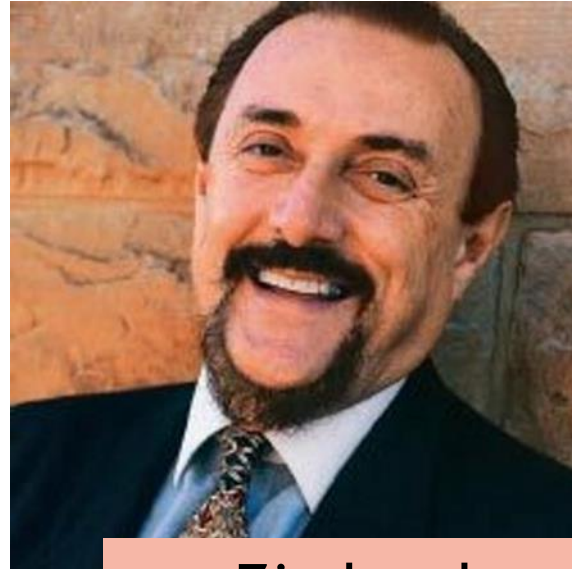
How free are
you to shape
who you are?



Zimbardo and Franco: “The Banality of Heroism”



Franco



Zimbardo

The “Heroic Elect”:

The idea that a hero is a special kind of person who has heroic personality traits





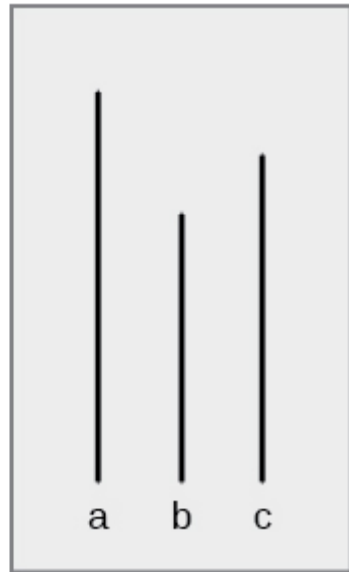
Zimbardo and Franco:

- ▶ We should resist the idea that what causes people to do evil things or heroic things is their inherent personality traits alone
- ▶ We need to learn something about what causes people to do *bad* things to other people in order to understand more about heroism



Forces that Shape How we Act: Conformity

- ▶ **Conformity:** going along with peers

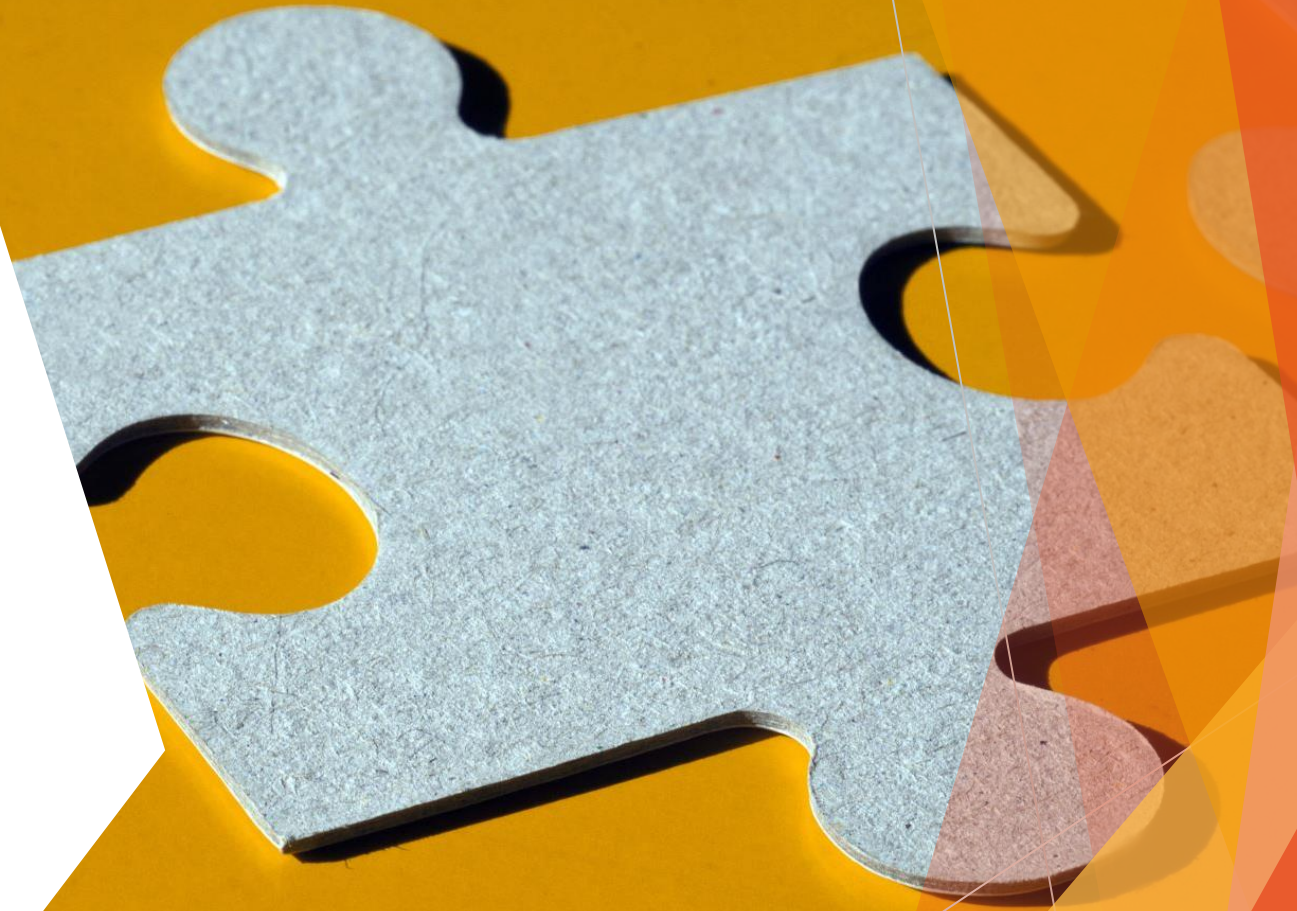


Asch Conformity
Experiments (1951)



Zimbardo and Franco:

- ▶ Conformity is one thing that makes people act immorally
- ▶ One of the keys to acting heroically is the ability to resist this desire to conform



Forces that Shape How we Act: Power over Others



Elizabeth A. Segal, Ph.D.
Social Empathy

EMPATHY

Power Blocks Empathy

Research shows that people with power have low levels of empathy.

Posted Sep 23, 2019



The way people with power view their surroundings is different too. High-powered people attend less to their surroundings and those around them; they are more narrowly focused, typically on what they are most concerned with accomplishing, the task at hand.³ Overall, power diminishes perspective-taking.⁴ Perspective-taking, which is viewing the world through the eyes of others, is critical to empathy.

Power Tends to Corrupt Decision-Making

By **Rick Nauert PhD**
Associate News Editor

New research explores how power can fuel overconfidence and negatively impact decision-making.

Case in point: the 2009 Gulf of Mexico oil rig disaster. British Petroleum (BP) executives had downplayed potential risks associated with their oil well, claiming that it was virtually impossible that a major accident would ever occur.

Power and Empathy

- ▶ Paul Piff's monopoly study
- ▶ “It’s not just how much money you have, it’s how much money you have in relation to others. It’s the sense of being on top of the social hierarchy that being wealthy gives you that becomes a bad thing when we...prioritize self-interest to the damage of those around us”

JUNE 29, 2012

The Money-Empathy Gap

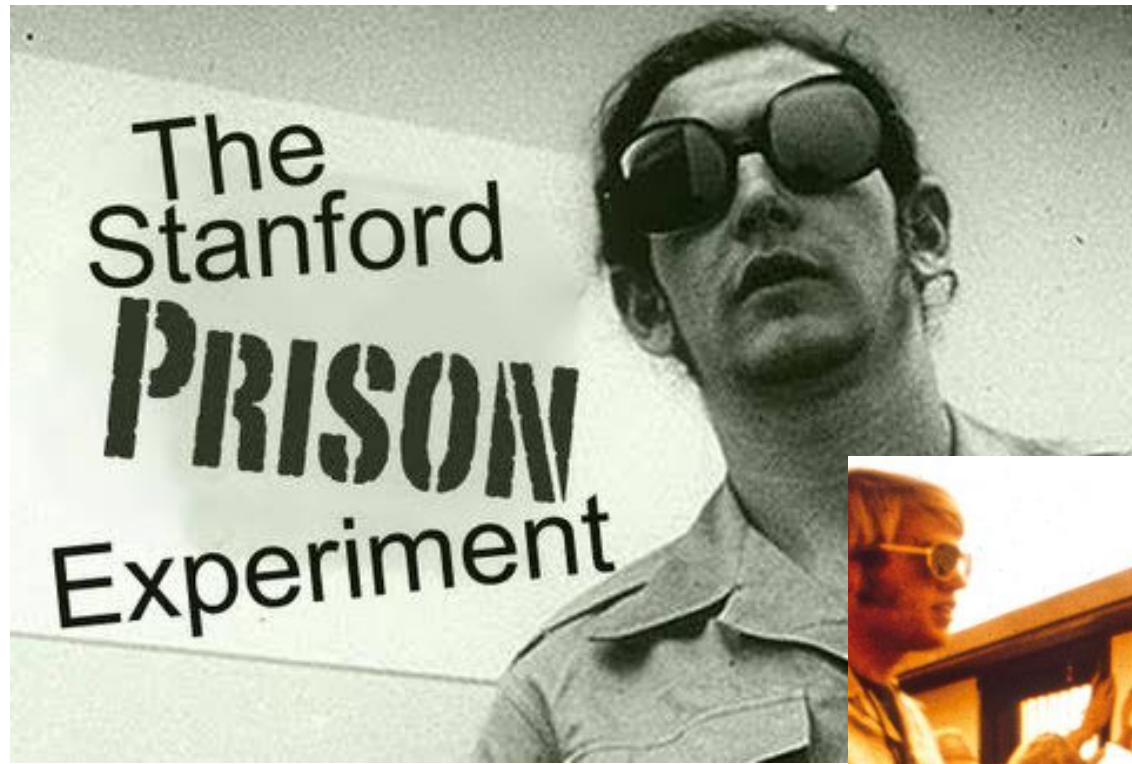
By Lisa Miller





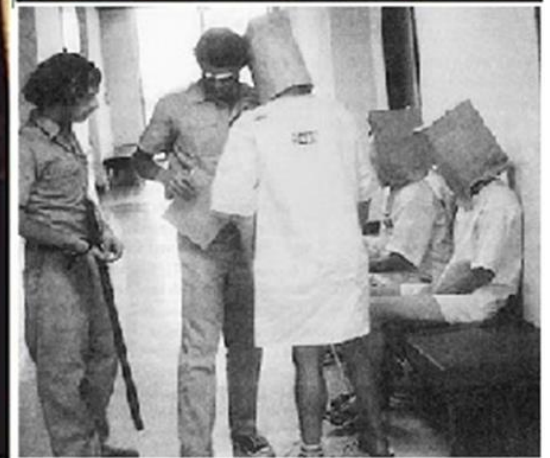
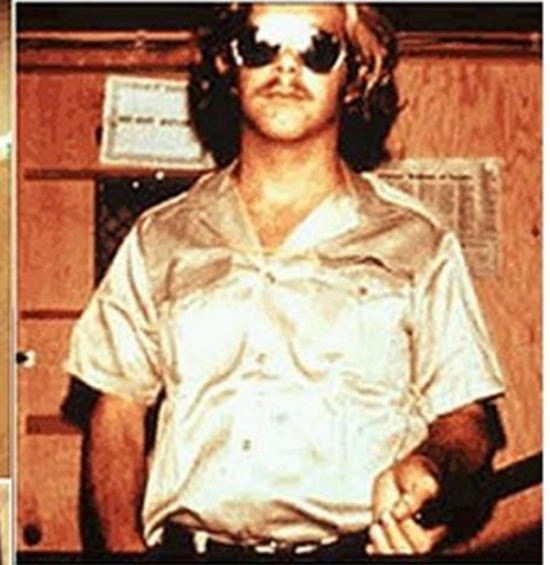
Philip Zimbardo

- Wondered whether **social roles** could make people drastically change their behaviour
- Made a name for himself with his **Stanford Prison Experiment**



Forces that Shape How we Act: Power over Others

- ▶ Zimbardo's experiment may suggest that the **social situations** people are placed in play a powerful role in making them act abusively



Criticisms:

“Twenty-one boys (OK, young men) are asked to play a game of prisoners and guards. It’s 1971. There have recently been many news reports about prison riots and the brutality of guards. So, in this game, what are these young men supposed to do? Are they supposed to sit around talking pleasantly with one another about sports, girlfriends, movies, and such? No, of course not. This is a study of prisoners and guards, so their job clearly is to act like prisoners and guards—or, more accurately, to act out their stereotyped views of what prisoners and guards do.”



Peter Gray Ph.D.
Freedom to Learn

Why Zimbardo’s Prison Experiment Isn’t in My Textbook

The results of the famous Stanford Prison Experiment have a trivial explanation.

Posted Oct 19, 2013



Criticisms

1. The guards and prisoners were acting out stereotyped roles
2. Zimbardo interacted with and instructed the guards

After interviewing some of the original participants in the Stanford Prison Experiment, Dr Blum argued that one of the most dramatic prisoner “breakdowns” was in fact faked by someone who just wanted to leave the experiment, that the researchers encouraged certain forms of behaviour, and that many of the participants played up to them. Others have suggested that the initial advertisements referring to a “psychological study of prison life” may have influenced the kind of person who applied to take part and so skewed the results.

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Zimbardo on Evil



Abu Ghraib, Iraq



Empathy's Biases

- ▶ Automatic empathic responses are biased towards people who we identify with or think are similar to us
- ▶ If it is harder to empathize with someone, it is easier to dehumanize them

Intergroup differences in the sharing of emotive states: neural evidence of an empathy gap

Jennifer N. Gutsell and Michael Inzlicht

Department of Psychology, University of Toronto, Scarborough, 1265 Military Trail, Toronto, Ontario M1C 1A4, Canada

Empathy facilitates prosocial behavior and social understanding. Here, however, we suggest that the most basic mechanism of empathy—the intuitive sharing of other's emotional and motivational states—is limited to those we like. Measuring electroencephalographic (EEG) alpha oscillations as people observed ingroup vs outgroup members, we found that participants showed similar activation patterns when feeling sad as when they observed ingroup members feeling sad. In contrast, participants did not show these same activation patterns when observing outgroup members and even less so the more they were prejudiced. These findings provide evidence from brain activity for an ingroup bias in empathy: empathy may be restricted to close others and, without active effort, may not extend to outgroups, potentially making them likely targets for prejudice and discrimination.

Brief Communications


Do You Feel My Pain? Racial Group Membership Modulates Empathic Neural Responses

Xiaojing Xu,¹ Xiangyu Zuo,¹ Xiaoying Wang,² and Shihui Han¹

¹Department of Psychology, Peking University, Beijing 100871, and ²Department of Radiology, Peking University First Hospital, Beijing 100034, People's Republic of China



Factors that Shape How We Act: Obedience

- ▶ **Conformity** = fall in line with peers
 - ▶ **Obedience** = do what authority figures tell you to do
- 

Milgram's Research on Obedience

- ▶ Would people still inflict serious harm on other people because they were ordered to do it by an authority figure?

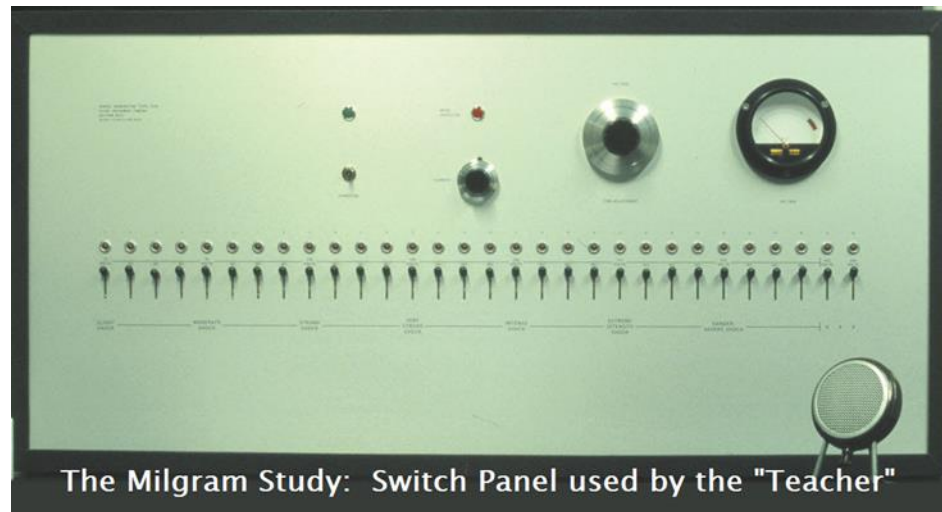


Milgram's “Shock Experiments”

- ▶ The subject (“teacher”) is required to **test the learner's memory** and administer a “shock” for each wrong answer
- ▶ At each wrong answer, the **voltage is increased**
- ▶ **No real shocks are administered**, but the teacher *thinks* she is administering shocks
- ▶ At several points in the experiment, a recording of the “learner” **cries out in pain and demands to be freed**
- ▶ If the “teacher” resists the experimenter's command to give a shock, **the experimenter insists that she continue** in the name of science

Forces that Shape How we Act: Obedience

- ▶ **Milgram's question:** How many people will **obediently** go all the way to the end of the experiment and administer the potentially lethal 450 volt shock, and how many would disobey?



The Milgram Study: Switch Panel used by the "Teacher"

Forces that Shape How we Act: Obedience

- ▶ **Milgram's original results:** Almost two thirds (65%) of people went to the end of the experiment and administered the potentially lethal 450 volt shock



The Banality of Evil

- ▶ Eichmann: I was only following orders
- ▶ “He doesn’t actually have any criminal motives He wanted to go along with the rest He was a typical functionary Ideology, in my view, didn’t play a very big role here ... And that was what I actually meant by banality. There’s nothing deep about it—nothing demonic! There’s simply the reluctance ever to imagine what the other person is experiencing” - Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*
- ▶ **Banality of evil:** under certain conditions and social pressures, ordinary people can commit acts that would otherwise be unthinkable

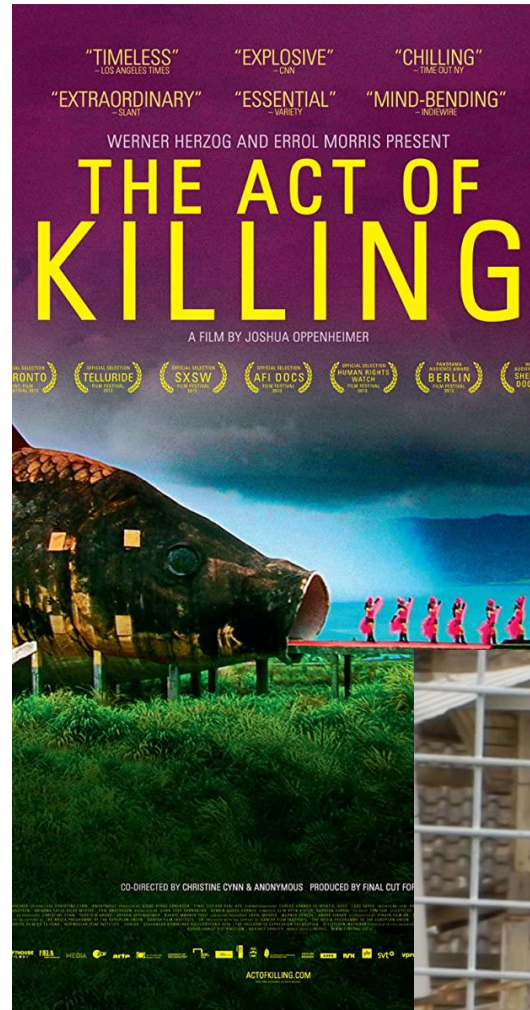


Adolf
Eichmann

The Banality of Evil



- ▶ In 1965, the Indonesian government was overthrown by the military
- ▶ Over 1 million people accused of being communists were murdered in less than a year
- ▶ The military recruited paramilitary groups and gangsters to carry out the killing
- ▶ Is this a good example of the banality of evil?



Anwar Congo

Forces that Shape How We Act: The By-Stander Effect and the Diffusion of Responsibility

- ▶ **Bystander effect:** individuals are less likely to offer to help when others are present
- ▶ **Diffusion of responsibility:** individuals are less likely to take responsibility for action or inaction when others are present

CRIME

Why did nobody help, asks mugged man, 79

By **Madeleine White** Staff Reporter

▲ Mon., April 26, 2010 | ⌚ 2 min. read

How free are
you to shape
who you are?




The Banality of Heroism

- ▶ If the capacity for *evil* is buried within each of us waiting to be let out (**banality of evil**), could it be that the capacity for *heroism* is *also* buried within each of us waiting to be let out (**banality of heroism**)?

But maybe that's not the striking result. Blass has noted that there must be "individual differences in obedience ... because in most obedience studies, given the same stimulus situation, one finds both obedience and disobedience taking place." In other words, **some people *do* disobey. Some of Milgram's subjects *did* defy the experimenter.** Like Jan Rensaleer, a Dutch immigrant who responded to the experiment's warning that he had no other choice to continue at 255 volts with the following memorable declaration:

"I do have a choice. Why don't I have a choice? I came here on my own free will. I thought I could help in a research project. But if I have to hurt somebody to do that, or if I was in his place, too, I wouldn't stay there. I can't continue. I'm very sorry. I think I've gone too far already, probably."

 *Observations | Opinion*

Rethinking the Infamous Milgram Experiment in Authoritarian Times

It's usually cited as showing that people will follow dubious orders under social pressure—but a more important lesson may be that *some* people will refuse

By Jacob M. Appel on December 9, 2019

So **maybe it is a mistake to view Milgram's work as an "obedience experiment"**—although he clearly did. **Maybe what he actually conducted was a disobedience experiment, showing that some people will not follow orders no matter how strong the social pressure.**

They are out there, waiting the moment when history calls upon them to disobey. We should not lose sight of them in the weeds of social psychology. They are Stanley Milgram's unheralded legacy—and we may even stand among them.

**SCIENTIFIC
AMERICAN**

HEALTH

Rethinking One of Psychology's Most Infamous Experiments

In the 1960s, Stanley Milgram's electric-shock studies showed that people will obey even the most abhorrent of orders. But recently, researchers have begun to question his conclusions—and offer some of their own.

By Cari Romm



In recent years, though, much of the attention has focused less on supporting or discrediting Milgram's statistics, and more on rethinking his conclusions. With a paper published earlier this month in the *British Journal of Social Psychology*, Matthew Hollander, a sociology Ph.D. candidate at the University of Wisconsin, is among the most recent to question Milgram's notion of obedience. After analyzing the conversation patterns from audio recordings of 117 study participants, Hollander found that Milgram's original classification of his subjects—either obedient or disobedient—failed to capture the true dynamics of the situation. Rather, he argued, people in both categories tried several different forms of protest—those who successfully ended the experiment early were simply better at resisting than the ones that continued shocking.

“Research subjects may say things like ‘I can’t do this anymore’ or ‘I’m not going to do this anymore,’” he said, even those who went all the way to 450 volts. “I understand those practices to be a way of trying to stop the experiment in a relatively aggressive, direct, and explicit way.”

It's a far cry from Milgram's idea that the capacity for evil lies dormant in everyone, ready to be awakened with the right set of circumstances. The ability to disobey toxic orders, Hollander said, is a skill that can be taught like any other—all a person needs to learn is what to say and how to say it.

How can we encourage
people to act morally -
even heroically - in
difficult situations?

Four Dimensions of Heroism

- 1) Heroism involves some type of quest (mission)
- 2) Heroism must involve a significant sacrifice or risk
- 3) Heroism can be passive or active
- 4) Heroism can be a sudden, one-time act or persist over time



Chiune Sugihara



Dr. Martin Luther
King Jr.

How Can We Foster Heroism?

- ▶ Having a strong **heroic imagination**: seeing yourself as a “hero in waiting”: someone who is prepared to make heroic sacrifices when the time comes
- ▶ We must develop in people “the capacity to imagine facing physically or socially risky situations, to struggle with the hypothetical problems these situations generate, and to consider one’s actions and consequences” (34)



Perspective-Taking: Decreasing Stereotype Expression, Stereotype Accessibility, and In-Group Favoritism

Adam D. Galinsky
Northwestern University

Gordon B. Moskowitz
Princeton University

Perspective Taking Combats Automatic Expressions of Racial Bias

Andrew R. Todd
University of Cologne

Galen V. Bodenhausen, Jennifer A. Richeson, and
Adam D. Galinsky
Northwestern University

Perspective taking and prejudice reduction: the mediational role of empathy arousal and situational attributions

THERESA K. VESCIO^{1*}, GRETCHEN B.
SECHRIST² AND MATTHEW P. PAOLUCCI¹

¹*Pennsylvania State University, USA*

²*State University of New York at Buffalo, USA*

Adopt a Growth Mindset

- ▶ **Growth mindset:** *believing* that your abilities can be improved effortfully over time (rather than being fixed) is associated with more improvements of those capacities!

Addressing the Empathy Deficit: Beliefs About the Malleability of Empathy Predict Effortful Responses When Empathy Is Challenging

Karina Schumann, Jamil Zaki, and Carol S. Dweck
Stanford University

Empathy is often thought to occur automatically. Yet, empathy frequently breaks down when it is difficult or distressing to relate to people in need, suggesting that empathy is often not felt reflexively. Indeed, the United States as a whole is said to be displaying an empathy deficit. When and why does empathy break down, and what predicts whether people will exert effort to experience empathy in challenging contexts? Across 7 studies, we found that people who held a malleable mindset about empathy (believing empathy can be developed) expended greater empathic effort in challenging contexts than did people who held a fixed theory (believing empathy cannot be developed). Specifically, a malleable theory of empathy—whether measured or experimentally induced—promoted (a) more self-reported effort to feel empathy when it is challenging (Study 1); (b) more empathically effortful responses to a person with conflicting views on personally important sociopolitical issues (Studies 2–4); (c) more time spent listening to the emotional personal story of a racial outgroup member (Study 5); and (d) greater willingness to help cancer patients in effortful, face-to-face ways (Study 6). Study 7 revealed a possible reason for this greater empathic effort in challenging contexts: a stronger interest in improving one’s empathy. Together, these data suggest that people’s mindsets powerfully affect whether they exert effort to empathize when it is needed most, and these data may represent a point of leverage in increasing empathic behaviors on a broad scale.

How Can We Foster the Heroic Imagination?

1. Approach situations mindfully, critically evaluate them
 - ▶ Develop your “discontinuity detector”: noticing when something doesn’t fit or doesn’t make sense
 - ▶ Arendt: the “only specific characteristic one could detect in [Eichmann’s] past as well as his behaviour during the trial and the preceding police examination was something entirely negative: it was not stupidity but a curious, quite authentic inability to think”
 - ▶ His “only personal distinction was perhaps extraordinary shallowness”
 - ▶ Eichmann’s speech was full of clichés and jargon (“thought-terminating clichés”)
 - Arendt, “Thinking and Moral Considerations”

How Can We Foster the Heroic Imagination?

2. Resist the urge to rationalize inaction
3. It's important not to fear interpersonal conflict, and develop the “personal hardiness” necessary to stand up for principles
 - ▶ This will get you in “heroic condition”
4. Use a code of conduct as a reminder of what you need to do
 - ▶ Have values that go beyond your simplistic self-interest



Chiune Sugihara

How Can We Foster the Heroic Imagination?

5. Remain aware of an extended time-horizon
 - ▶ Think carefully about future ramifications of your actions
6. Try to accept and transcend anticipated negative consequences
7. Be aware of the banality of evil
 - ▶ Being aware of social forces like the diffusion of responsibility, the effects of power

What Do You Think?

- ▶ How much can you shape who you are?
- ▶ Can people change and become morally better, even capable of heroism?

