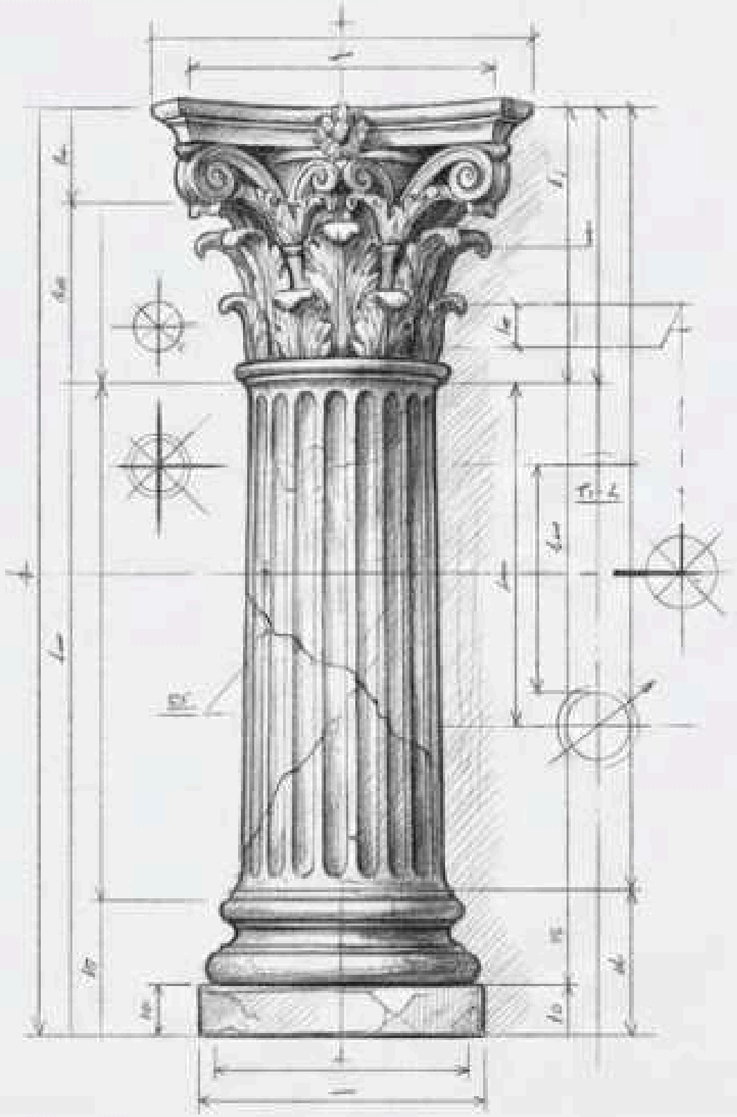
¶ 3.1

# Lecture 3: Social Structure, Groups, and Organizations

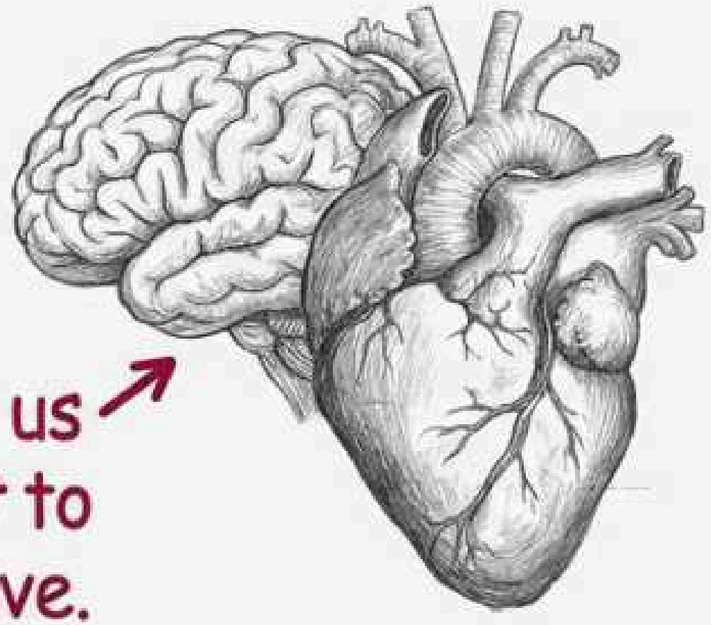
SOC 101 B

- Statuses & Roles
- Group Dynamics (Dyads to Triads)
- Conformity & Obedience (Asch & Milgram)
- Solidarity & Bureaucracy



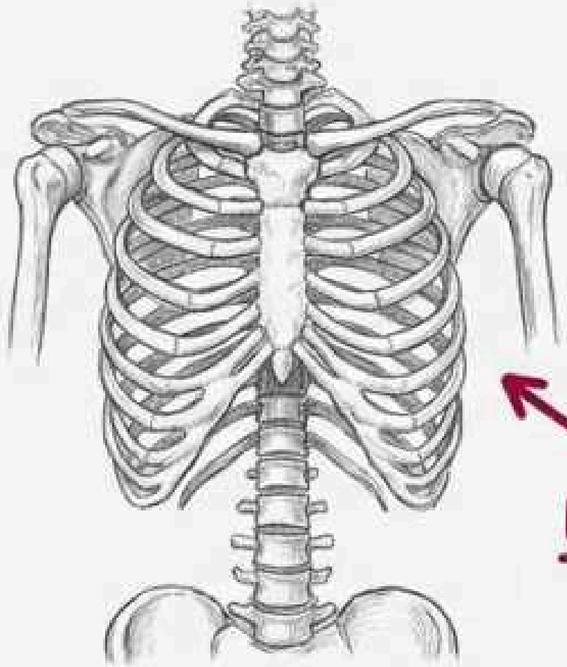
¶ 3.2

## Culture
(Values & Beliefs)



Tells us *what* to believe.

## Social Structure
(Framework & Positions)



Tells us *where* we stand.

Structure explains why people in similar positions behave in similar ways, even when they have never met.

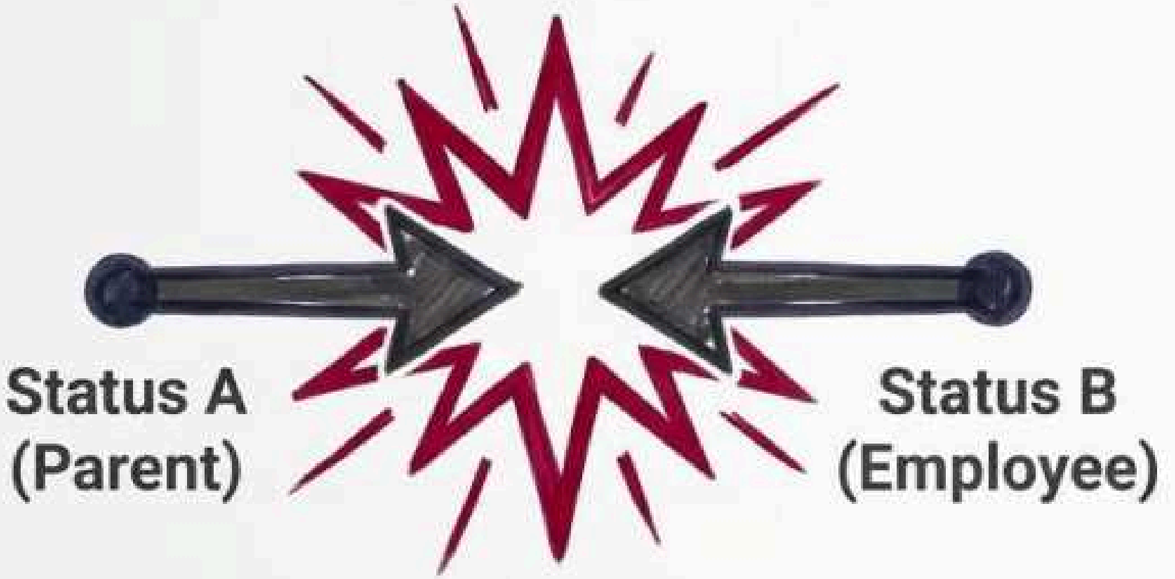
¶ 3.3

$$\sum \text{Statuses} = S_{ascribed} + S_{achieved}$$

| Ascribed Status | Achieved Status | Master Status |
| --- | --- | --- |
| - Assigned at birth by circumstance.<br>- Examples: Age, family of origin. | - Earned or chosen.<br>- Examples: Occupation, degree. | - Overrides all others.<br>- Dictates how society treats you. |

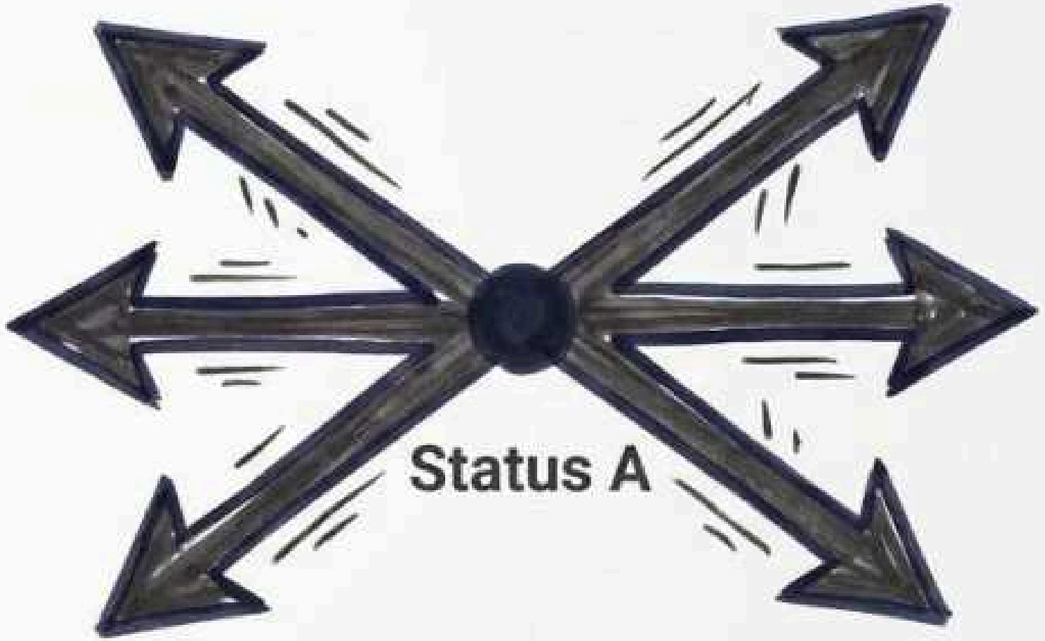
¶3.4

Status = Something you HAVE.
Role = Something you DO.




## Role Conflict

(Demands of two different roles clash)

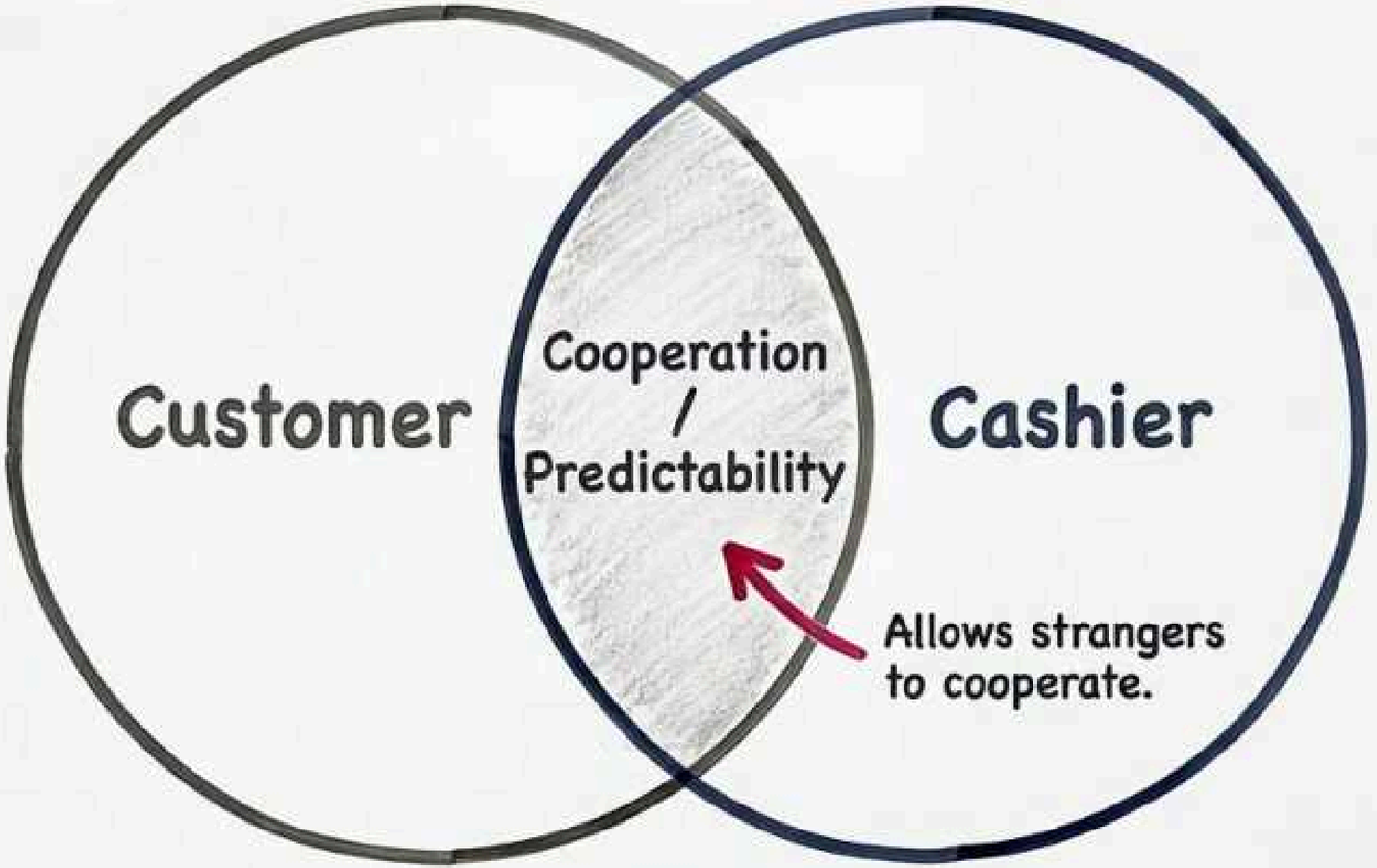


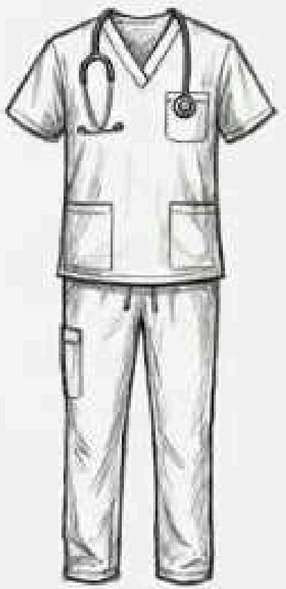

## Role Strain

(Demands within a single role pull in different directions)

¶ 3.5





1924

2024

**Roles are not fixed scripts. They are interpreted, negotiated, and evolved over time.**

¶3.6

Shared Trait Only = **Category**
(e.g., People born in May)

↓

Shared Location Only = **Aggregate**
(e.g., Crowd at a bus stop)

↓

Interaction + Shared Sense of Belonging
= **Social Group**

⬇

Groups are the next level of social structure.

# Charles Cooley's Group Typology ¶ 3.7

| Primary Group | Secondary Group |
| --- | --- |
| Scale: Small, intimate, lasting. | Scale: Larger, impersonal, transient. |
| Nature: Personal (Family, close friends). | Nature: Organized (Company, university class). |
| Purpose: Valued for their own sake; needed to feel we matter. | Purpose: Valued for what they do; organized around a goal. |

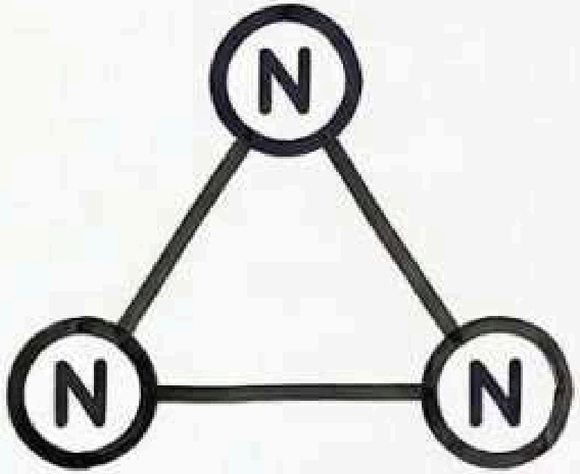
# Simmel's Group Size Dynamics

¶ 3.8




## Dyad (N=2)

- Most intimate, most fragile.
- If one leaves, the group ends.



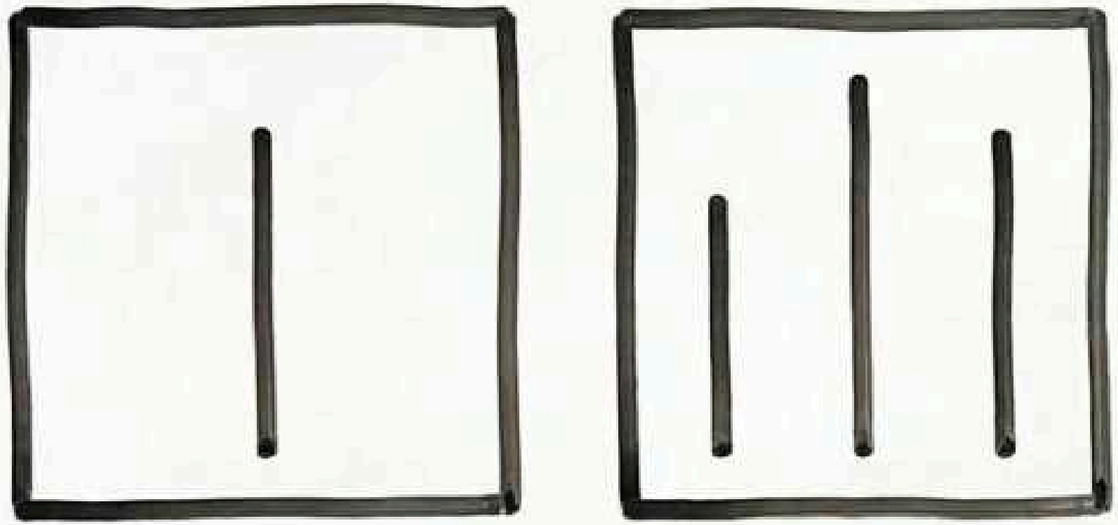

## Triad (N=3)

- More stable (2 can outvote 1).
- Allows alliances, mediation, and exclusion.

**As groups grow: Stability ↑ Intimacy ↓**

# The Asch Experiment (1950s)

¶ 3.9







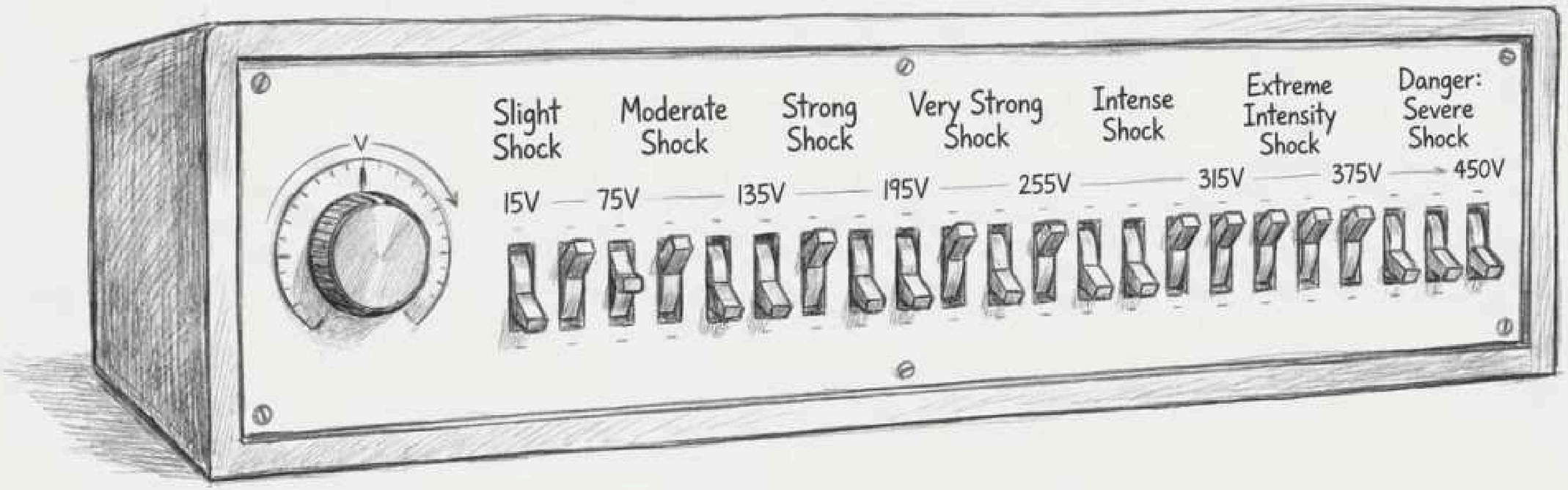
**Finding:** ~75% of volunteers went along with a unanimously wrong group at least once.

**Takeaway:** Conformity overrides our own eyes.

# The Milgram Experiment (1960s)

¶ 3.10

## 2/3 Volunteers × Authority Figure → Maximum Voltage

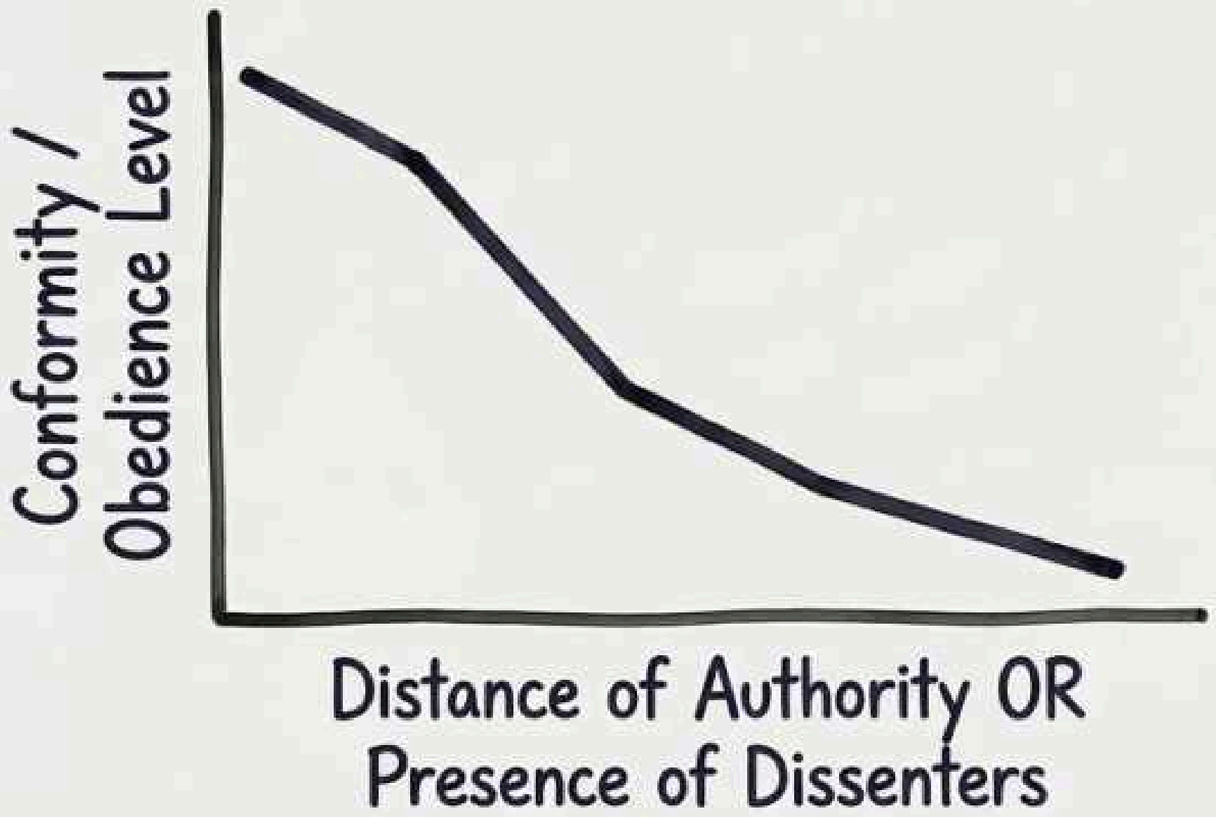



Scenario: Volunteers instructed to shock an actor for incorrect answers.

Takeaway: Obedience to authority frequently overrides personal conscience.

# Behavior = $f$(Situation)

¶3.11




- People are not mindless. Circumstances dictate obedience.
- Modifiers: A single dissenter (Asch) or a distant authority (Milgram) shatters conformity.

Both studies raised major ethical questions regarding deception, leading to strict modern regulations.

# Granovetter's Strength of Weak Ties (1973)



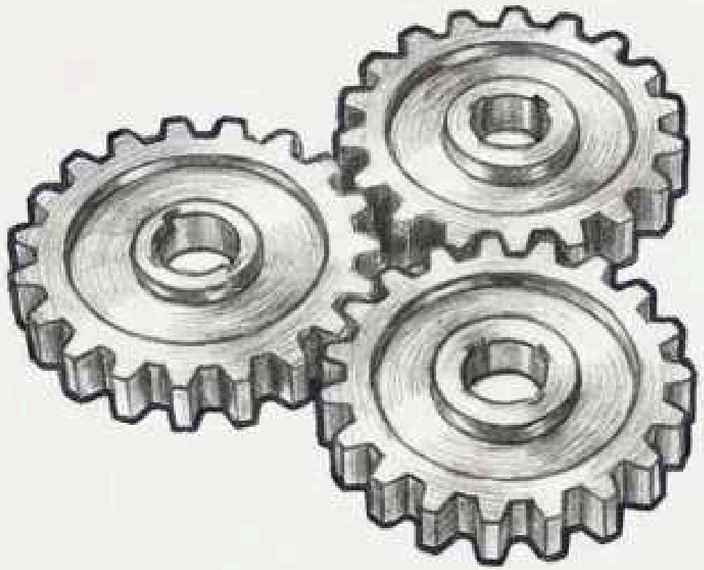

Close Friends
(an echo chamber of identical information).

New Circles &
Job Opportunities

**Takeaway**: Acquaintances (weak ties) bridge the gap to different social circles and novel opportunities far better than close friends do.

# Mechanical Solidarity

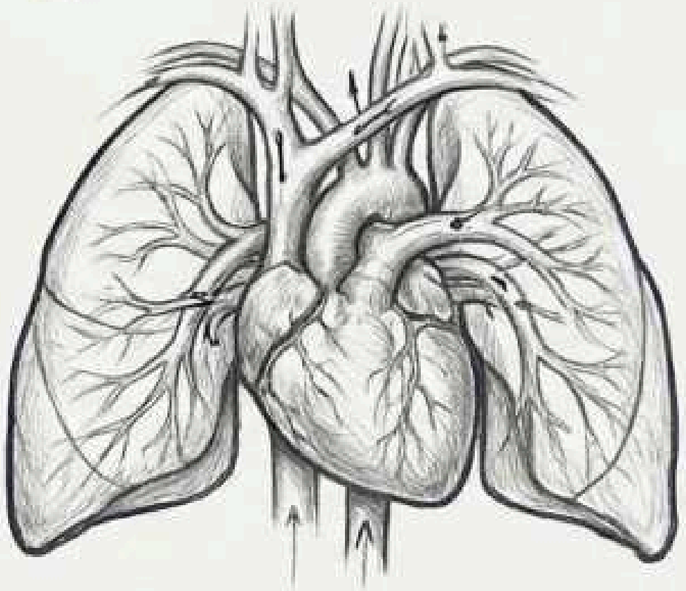
$x = y = z$



- Small, traditional societies.
- Held together by similar work and shared beliefs.

# Organic Solidarity ¶3.13

$x + y + z = \text{Whole}$



- Large, modern societies.
- Held together by interdependent specialization.
- We trust the pilot and pharmacist because we cannot do their jobs.

# Max Weber's Ideal Bureaucracy

¶ 3.14




Designed to be fair and efficient. Essential for hospitals, armies, and tax offices.

# The Iron Cage & McDonaldization

¶ 3.15

Weber's Fear: Rules become more important than the goals they serve, trapping people in an iron cage of rationality.



Efficiency + Calculability + Predictability + Control = McDonaldization

*(Ritzer, 1990s)*

The hidden cost of total efficiency is a loss of human warmth and variety.

¶ 3.16

# The Double Nature of Society




→ Structure
is not permanent; it is made of human actions.

¶ 3.17

# Bureaucracy Audit: Your Organization

Think of a school, hospital, or employer you interact with.

1. Which of Weber's 5 bureaucratic features does it clearly show?

2. Where have its rules explicitly helped you?

3. Where have the rules become an iron cage, getting in the way of their intended purpose?

# Looking Ahead to Lecture 4

¶ 3.18



We've established the rules of social structure.

Next: What happens when people break the rules? Why does society define some acts as deviant?