

SHOCK GENERATOR TYPE ZLB

DYSON INSTRUMENT COMPANY

WALTHAM MASS.

OUTPUT: 5 VOLTS - 450 VOLTS

The man who shocked the world

Milgram's Behavioral Study of Obedience (1963)

Contents of this Presentation

- Obedience in our lives?
- All about the researcher: Background, Study origin
- The Milgram experiment: method, demonstration, results, interpretation
- Criticism: Ethical Issues, Reliability, Replicability
- New developments
- Conclusion




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Where would you position yourself?

Risk averse or *risk taking*?

Should the students who were obedient be found guilty?



Discussion

- **Do you have any examples of obedience to authority from your own life?**
- Take a few minutes to think about it (with a partner if you want)
- Afterwards we will talk about it in the group.

Obedience to Authority in our lives

The Ukraine war

Soda Cracker Experiment

- Experiment by Kurt Lewin's student Jerome D. Frank in the 1930s
 - Investigation of human's resistance to food intake
-

Condition 1	Condition 2	Condition 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Experiment leader told subjects that it was necessary to eat 12 unsalted crackers for the experiment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- told that it was of no relevance to eat crackers- Told that experiment leaders would try to get them to eat	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Subjects ate first cracker with experiment leader together
<p>-> people usually ate crackers without reluctance</p>	<p>-> rapid resistance to the efforts of the experimenter to get the people to eat</p>	<p>-> afterwards general unsureance about whether they should continue eating the crackers</p>

Background Researcher Stanley Milgram

General information:

- born August 15th 1933 in New York City, died December 20th 1984
 - Jewish origin
 - family immigrated from Romania and Hungary to United States during World War I
 - immediate and extended family both affected by Holocaust
 - after World War II, relatives, who had survived concentration camps, stayed with Milgram family
- strong connection to Jewish community and its' history



Background Researcher Stanley Milgram

- Academic career:

-
- 1954: bachelor degree **political science** (Queens college, New York)
 - also studied at Brooklyn College (A-grades in “**Psychology of personality**” & “an eclectic approach to social psychology”)
 - applied to **PhD program** in **social psychology** at Harvard university
-> rejected due to insufficient background in psychology
 - accepted after enrolling as student in Harvards office for special students
 - 1960: became assistant professor at Yale
 - 1961: PhD in Social Psychology from Harvard

Otto Adolf Eichmann

- *1906 in Solingen, Germany
- †1962 in Tel Aviv, Israel
- Early career: electrician, mechanic



Otto Adolf Eichmann

- Was in charge of the identification, assembly and transportation of Jews in all parts of Europe that were occupied by Nazi Deutschland to concentration and extermination camps (f.ex. Auschwitz)
- Escaped to Argentina after the 2nd world war
- He was found and had to stand in trial in Israel to determine whether or not he was guilty
- Found guilty after many months of the trial



Otto Adolf Eichmann

“Eichmann [...] were moved less by great hatreds than by the petty desire to do a task well and to please their superiors. Indeed, they concentrated so much on these tasks that they forgot about their consequences.”

-Hannah Arendt

Study Origin

Started in 1961 after the trial of Eichmann

“Could it be that Eichmann and his million accomplices in the Holocaust were just following orders? Could we call them all accomplices?”

- Stanley Milgram

- Conducted research on the nature of obeying to authority
- Measured the willingness of study participants to obey an authority figure who instructed them to perform acts which conflicted with their personal conscience

Study Origin

Stanley Milgram and Solomon Asch's (1956) experiment on conformity:

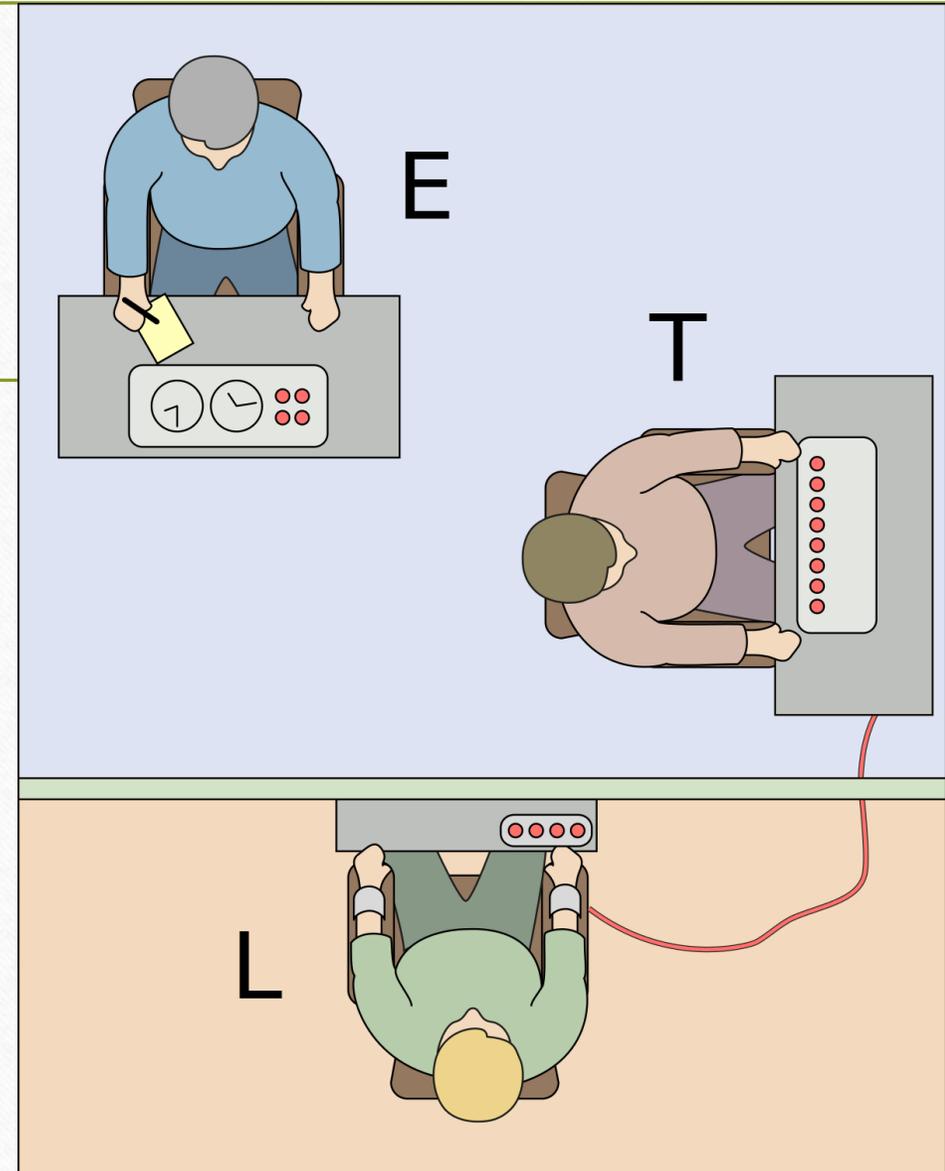
“I was dissatisfied that the test of conformity was judgment about lines. I wondered whether grounds could pressure a person into performing an act whose human import was readily apparent, perhaps behaving aggressively toward another person. “

Method

- 40 men between 20 and 50 years old
- Participant and confederate were “randomly” assigned to roles of “teacher” and “learner”
- Actually though the confederate always “learner”, participant always “teacher”

Method

- The “teacher” was prodded by the experimenter to use ever-stronger shocks on the “learner” for wrong answers
- the sequence of wrong and right answers, the yelps of pain and the sequence of prods was all scripted
- The “learner” was never actually shocked





- Scores -

- 40 out of 40: beyond level "very strong shock"
- 40 out of 40: shocked up to 300 volt
- 5 out 40: refused after 300 volt
- 4 out of 40: shocked once more
- 2 out 40: shocked up to 330 volt
- 1 out of 40: 345, 360, 375
- **26 out of 40 shocked up to 450 volt**

- Health aspects of tension -

- signs of **nervousness**
(sweating, trembling, stuttering, biting their lip, groaning, digging fingernails into flesh)
- regular occurrence of nervous **laughter**
(14 of 40 nervously laughed/ smiled while shocking)
- **seizures/** severe seizures
(observed for 3 subjects, 1 seizure so bad that experiment had to be interrupted)

Results

- Physical reactions after end of experiment -

- **sighs of relief & regret**
(mopping eyebrows, shaking head, rubbed fingers over eyes, nervously fumbled cigarettes)
- **few remained calm** during experiment and showed only minimal signs of tension afterwards

- Evaluation of subjects -

- **post-experimental interview**
“How painful to the learner were the last few shocks that you administered to him?”
- answers on a 14-point scale
(from “not at all painful” to “extremely painful”)
- modal response was “extremely painful”
(14)

Interpretation

Results showed high rates of obedience

→ why?

Possible answer:

Circumstances most often influence or determine how obedient a person will be

Interpretation

In the case of the Milgram experiment we can say that:

1. The victim **also** has voluntarily submitted to the authority system of the experimenter
2. The subject has also entered the experiment voluntarily, therefore perceives himself under obligation to aid the experimenter
3. The subjects sense of obligation is strengthened since he got paid for coming to the lab
...and many more...

Interpretation

The more detailed and deeper the researches were the more visible the complexity of understanding “obedience”

Most important understandings and realization:

- Humans are not solitary but function within hierarchical structures
- The formation of hierarchically organized groupings lends to enormous external (f.ex safety) and internal (f. ex harmony) advantages
- Prevalent in our everyday life (starting from life at home, to school, to work etc.)

Interpretation

- Hierarchies only work when internal modification occurs in the elements of which they are composed
- +
- When individual direction are suppressed and controlled in favor of control from higher-level components
- Cybernetic standpoint

Interpretation

The agentic state:

- The agentic state occurs when a self-regulating entity is internally modified so as to allow its functioning within a system of hierarchical control.

→ In this condition the individual no longer views himself as responsible for his own actions but defines himself as an instrument for carrying out the wishes of others.

Interpretation

An observer in the laboratory stated after the experiment:

I observed a mature and initially poised businessman enter the laboratory smiling and confident. Within 20 minutes he was reduced to a twitching, stuttering wreck, who was rapidly approaching a point of nervous collapse. He constantly pulled on his earlobe and twisted his hands. At one point he pushed his fist into his forehead and muttered: "Oh God, let's stop it." And yet he continued to respond to every word of the experimenter and obeyed to the end. [...]

Criticism

1. Ethical Concerns
2. Reliability
3. Replicability



Discussion

- **What might be criticised about Milgram's shock experiment?**
- Take a few minutes to think about it (with a partner if you want)
- Afterwards we will talk about it in the group.

Ethical Concerns

“The slavish obedience to authority we have come to associate with Milgram’s experiments begins to sound much more like bullying and coercion when you listen to this material”

Perry (2013)

Ethical Concerns

Experimenter Bias and unstandardized testing conditions

- 4 succeeding “prods” were scripted: these were used by the experimenter to influence the participant to continue the experiment
- but experimenters used more prods than scripted; they improvised and thereby escalated the situations!
- in some instances they invented more arguments and “argued” with the participants
- Milgram watched some of the experiments through a one-sided mirror

Ethical Concerns

Experimenter Bias and unstandardized testing conditions

- condition 20 (women instead of men)
 - one woman was prompted 26 times, a second women 14 times, others 11 times, 9 times and so on
 - higher obedience in this scenario was not a result of gender difference but of observer bias!

Ethical Concerns

Inappropriate Debriefing

- most participants did not learn immediately after the experiment that the learner was not actually shocked
 - this applied to about 600 people, 3/4 of people from conditions 1-18
 - most people only learned about the full story after almost a full year, when they were sent the study report
- Milgram intentionally misrepresented on the debriefing process

Ethical Concerns

- Condition 24, also known as the "relationship condition"
- Never properly released due to ethical concerns and because it would not have supported Milgram's research goal
- participants were instructed beforehand to bring a friend/relative/ neighbor
- one was the „teacher“, the other the „learner“
- ethics would have been very hard to defend: people withz relations were asked to hurt each other

Reliability

There was and still is much criticism towards the Milgram experiment

The three most common critics on reliability:

1. The subjects were not representative of the general population
2. The subjects did not believe they were adjusting shocks to the victims
3. The circumstances were not representative to the whole world (laboratory vs. the whole world)

Reliability

1. Representativeness of the subjects:

- All Male college students
- Self selected
- "volunteer personality"

Reliability

2. The lack of believe of adjusting shocks to the victims:

- In one experiment 2 out of 40 subjects did not think to be administering shocks (both were obedient)
- Examination: questionnaire after every experiment results: $\frac{3}{4}$ acted under the believe they were shocking the victim $\frac{1}{5}$ has serious doubts

Reliability

2. The lack of believe of adjusting shocks to the victims:

In sum:

- The majority of subjects accepted the experimental situation as genuine
- Denial of an unpleasant action can serve a defensive function, and some subjects came to view their performance in a favorable light only by reconstructing what their state of mind was when they were administering shocks.

Reliability

3. Representativeness of the circumstances:

→ The processes of obedience stay invariant so long as the basic condition for its occurrence exists:

One is defined into a relationship with a person who one feels has, by virtue of his status, the right to prescribe behavior

Analog: Any social occasion has unique properties to it and the social scientist's task is finding the principles that run through this surface diversity.

Where legitimate authority is the source of action, relationship overwhelms content.

Reliability

3. Representativeness of the circumstances:

The degree of parallels between obedience in the lab and Nazi Deutschland:
Obviously there are enormous differences

BUT:

A common psychological process is centrally involved in both events

Reliability

3. Representativeness of the circumstances:

Ordinary people no longer perceived themselves as a responsible part of the causal chain leading to action against a person. The way in which responsibility is cast off, and individuals become thoughtless agents of action, is of general import.

(Agentic state)

Replication and new developments

Milgram's replications:

- Conducted 18 experiments
- Varied different parameters such as:
 - Gender
 - Immediacy of the victim
 - Immediacy of the authority
 - Number of "teachers"

Milgram's replications

- **Group effects 1:**

- 3 teachers, 2 actors and 1 subject
- one teacher refuses to continue at 150 volt, second refuses at 210 volt
- 4 of 40 (10%) continue to the end
- largest number break off along with second “teacher”

- **Group effects 2:**

- 1 teacher (actor) and 1 assistant (subject)
- actor administers the shocks, subject only has to assist the teacher
- 37 of 40 (92.5%) continue to end

Milgram's replications

- **Gender effects:**

- only women conducted as subjects
- obedience did not significantly differ from the results with only men
- women experienced higher levels of stress

- **Immediacy of victim 1:**

- victim less close and obvious for subject
- Victim is neither seen or heard at all
- 100 % shock to the maximum

Milgram's replications

- **Immediacy of victim 1:**
 - Subject has to hold victim's hand down to electrode to receive the shock
 - 20 % shock to the maximum
- **Immediacy of the authority**
 - Experimenter absent from the room
 - Instructions given by telephone
 - 20.5 % shock to maximum

New developments - Burger's partial replication (2009)



- Approach to ethical concerns:
 - knowledge that 4 out of 5 participants who continued to follow experimenters instructions up to **150 volt**, **continued** shock generators range **up to 450 volts**
 - > knowing how participants respond up to and including 150 volt point allows **assumption** about **what they would do if allowed to continue**
 - **stopping study** within seconds at this **particular juncture** -> **avoid** exposing participants to **extreme stress** in subsequent parts

New developments - Burger

- Method of Burger's partial replication:

- Base condition -

- participant **alone**
- when he **agrees to shock after 150 volt level study is ended**
- if he shows reluctance experimenter has 4 standardized verses to convince him to continue

-Modeled refusal condition -

- confederate** as another "**teacher**" implied
- at 90 volt: **confederate refuses** to continue shocking
- experimenter asks real participant to continue
- confederate sat silently throughout rest of study while real participant should continue giving shocks

New developments - Burger

- Results of Burger's partial replication:

- Base condition -	- Modeled refusal condition -
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Obedience rate slightly lower than in Milgram's experiment- Difference fell short in statistical significance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Obedience rate almost didn't differ from base condition- Result very close to Milgram's finding (65%)

New developments – Sheridan & King (1972)

- Replication with an "authentic" victim, a puppy present
 - 13 male and 13 female student instructed to give graded shocks to a puppy (not actually dangerous shocks)
 - told to take puppy through series of "discrimination training" trials
 - despite reactions of puppy, **54% of male** and **100 % of female** followed up to purported "450 volt shocks"
 - participants showed **high levels of stress** while giving shocks to puppy
- obeyed authoritatively given commands, even when victim was "authentic"

Conclusion

- The tendency to obey was way higher than ever anticipated and expected
- This tendency can make people act contrarily to their moral principles
- It does NOT take evil people to carry out brutal actions
- Human behavior is often the product of external circumstances rather than one's supposed character and values

When you think of the long and gloomy history of man,
you will find more hideous crimes have been committed
in the name of obedience than have ever been committed
in the name of rebellion.[...]

-C.P. Snow, 1961




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Where would you position yourself?



Risk averse or *risk taking*?

Should the students who were obedient be found guilty?

Could you use the same morale when judging about bigger crimes (e.g. wars)?

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