

S. MILGRAM (1963) BEHAVIOURAL STUDY OF OBEDIENCE

Two topics to learn about:

- Conformity
- Obedience

Additionally, historical context to Milgram's study.

Milgram's experiment into obedience to authority:
administering electric shocks to learners as punishment for
mistakes.

*What degree of electric shock would people give to
learner?*

MILGRAM : ELECTRIC SHOCKS

DESCRIPTION	VOLTS			
SLIGHT SHOCK	15	30	45	60
MODERATE SHOCK	75	90	103	120
STRONG SHOCK	135	150	165	180
V.STRONG SHOCK	255	270	285	300
INTENSE SHOCK	195	210	225	240
EXTREMELY INTENSE SHOCK	315	330	345	360
DANGER: SEVERE SHOCK	375	390	405	420
X X X		435	450	

- AT WHAT POINT DO YOU THINK A “TEACHER” WOULD STOP BECAUSE HE FELT THE SHOCKS WERE TOO STRONG?

Historical Background:

Nazi war crimes (World War 2)



Eichmann – Extermination of Jews Holocaust



And more recently;

Vietnam (1970) : My Lai Massacre

Lieutenant Calley



How can such behaviour be explained?

Conformity

- Doing what others in the same role do, or what you think they would do.

“Yielding to group pressure” (Crutchfield, 1962)

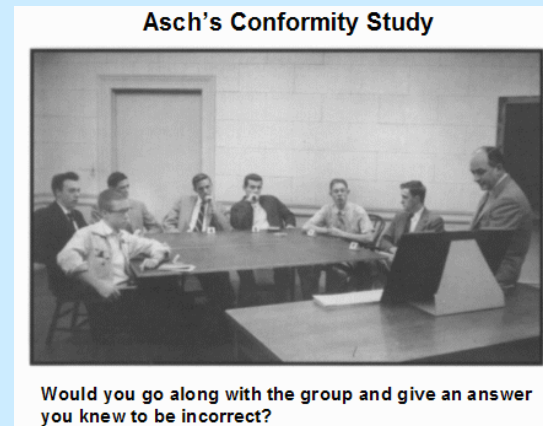
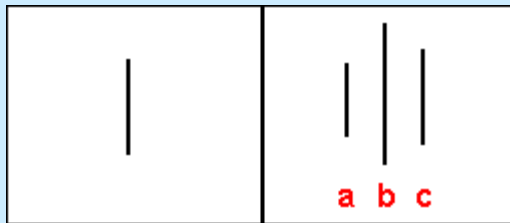
Make a list of ways in which young people conform.

Jennes (1932) Estimating beans in a bottle

Asch (1951) Judging the length of lines; conforming to answers that are blatantly untrue.

- Average level of conformity = **32%**

75% subjects conformed to wrong answer at least once.



Giving up personal responsibility to go along with decisions of others.

Obedience

- Doing what you are told to do by someone in authority

In what ways are you obedient to authority?

Why?

- Self-preservation (due to coercive power) ?
- Learning; conditioned to obey – “Do as you are told!”?
- Social Harmony?

REASONS FOR “BLIND OBEDIENCE”;

Personality type? (e.g.; **Adorno**)

Social Influence – would most ordinary people unquestioningly obey authority?

Public Announcement

**WE WILL PAY YOU \$4.00 FOR ONE HOUR OF YOUR
TIME**

Persons Needed for a Study of Memory

“We will pay five hundred New Haven men to help us complete a scientific study of memory and learning. The study is being done at [Yale University](#). “Each person who participates will be paid \$4.00 (plus 50c carfare) for approximately 1 hour’s time. We need you for only one hour: there are no further obligations. You may choose the time you would like to come (evenings, weekdays, or weekends).

*No special training, education, or experience is needed.
We want:

City Employees

- **Labourers**

Factory Workers

- **Barbers**

- Businessman
- Clerks
- Professional people
- Telephone workers

- Constructions Workers

- Salespeople

- White-collar workers

- Others

All persons must be between the ages of 20 and 50.
High school and college students cannot be used.
“If you meet these qualifications, fill out the coupon
below and mail it now to **Professor Stanley Milgram.**
Department of Psychology. Yale University, New Haven.
You will be notified later of the specific time and place of
the study. We reserve the right to decline any
application.

* You will be paid \$4.00 (plus 50c carfare) as soon as you
arrive at the laboratory.

TO:

PROF. **STANLEY MILGRAM**, DEPARTMENT OF
PSYCHOLOGY, YALE UNIVERSITY, NEW HAVEN,
CONN. I want to take part in this study of memory and
learning. I am between the ages of 20 and 50. I will be
paid \$4.00 (plus 50c carfare) if I participate.

NAME (Please Print)

ADDRESS

Telephone no Best time to call you

AGE OCCUPATION SEX

CAN YOU COME:

WEEKDAYS EVENINGS WEEKENDS

Milgram's explanation for his findings:

Existence of two distinctive states of consciousness;

- **Autonomous state**; acting according to your own values & beliefs
- **Agentic state**; acting as an “agent” for another person, suppressing own values, giving up responsibility

WHY DID PEOPLE OBEY?

- The study was conducted at a prestigious university (Yale)
- The experimenter was perceived as an authority figure.
 - The subjects has been paid and may have felt obligated.
 - They were told that the shocks were not harmful
- The learners consented and were answering up until the twentieth shock.

What other reasons can you think of?