

SITUATIONAL OBLIGATIONS AND OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY

MARKETING – ADVERTISING – ART – DESIGN



The disappearance of a sense of responsibility is the most far-reaching consequence of submission to authority.

— Stanley Milgram —

GLOBAL COMMERCIAL IMPERATIVES

Milgram's Obedience to Authority

- **Dr. Stanley Milgram, 1950s-60s**
- **Yale University *Interaction Lab***
- **Post-WW2 -- Inhumane acts against humanity**

- **Research Interests:**
 - **Authority?**
 - **Human Obedience?**
 - **Crowd Mentality and Behaviors?**
 - **Accountability and Responsibility?**



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The Milgram Experiment

Obedience to Authority

- “Memory learning experiment”
 - *Improved* memory based on punishment vs. rewards
 - 40 participants (men: wide range of ages, educations, professions)
 - Paid \$

The Roles:

1. Researcher
2. Teacher
3. Learner



Obedience (Dr. Stanley Milgram, 1962)

U.S. National Library of Medicine

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNqfPKWiRao>

The Milgram Experiment

Obedience to Authority--FINDINGS



- IMPORTANT FINDINGS:

☑ **65 percent of the subjects** (26 out of 40) continued to inflict shocks right up to the **450-volt level**, despite the learner's screams, protests, and, at the 330-volt level, disturbing silence.

- **ADDITIONALLY**, they **REPEATEDLY** obeyed the experimenter's instruction to deliver **DEATHLY** 450-volt shocks. "The Experiment must continue..."

☑ **HUMANS** as complete rule-following **SHEEP** (abusive-violent-unquestioning sheep)??? as long as the authority figure appeared "legitimate" and co-present.

☑ **Agentic Shift:** NOT TAKING accountability for one's own actions

- ▷ An **agentic state** is a state of mind in which a person will allow **other people** **objects**, or "**outside**" forces to direct their behaviors and **pass responsibility** for the consequences of the behaviors to the person telling them what to do.

☑ **ROLES of TECHNOLOGY?** INCREASED AGENTIC SHIFTS!!!

Media, Technology, CONFORMITY

Social Psychology and Personality Science



☑ Normative Influence Conformity/Obedience

- ▷ The **desire to be liked** – when we conform to **fit in** with the group because we don't want to appear foolish or be left out.

☑ Informational Influence

- ▷ The **desire to follow the RIGHT PATH/PERSON**—we OFTEN conform because we are **unsure of the situation** or THINK that we **lack knowledge**,
- ▷ So **we look to others WHO ACT AS IF THEY ARE RIGHT** or who we believe may have more information than us.
- ▷ People **who talk MORE** or are of a **NARCISSISTIC** bent emerge as both **unelected and elected AUTHORITIES**. They have “answers” ... (or just persuasive abilities...)
- ▷ **MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY as AUTHORITIES**. The **MEDIA/INFORMATION providers as AUTHORITIES** → Google, iPhone, NYTIMES, Fox News, Textbooks, etc.

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Obedience to Authority

FOLLOW-UPS

- 1. 1973** American Psychological Association's ethical principles of research with human subjects
 - Precluded psychologists from conducting experiments that, like Milgram's, were likely to cause serious distress to subjects.
- 2. Other countries.** The Milgram experiment repeated and extended in **other countries**,and attempts by U.S. experimenters to sidestep these constraints.
 - **2009** Jerry Burger (Santa Clara, CA)
 - In the original experiment **79 percent** of subjects who continued after the 150 volts—(screams) went all the way to the end of the scale, at 450 volts.
 - **REPLICATION TO 150.** About **70 percent** were willing to continue the experiment at this point, suggesting that subjects remain just as compliant in the 21st century.
 - **2012** France TV Game Show **EXPERIMENT (J.-L. Beauvois, *European Review of Applied Psychology*)**
 - **81 percent** as opposed to the original 65 percent).
 - **2015** POLAND Dariusz Dolinski and colleagues **SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGISTS**
 - A replication conducted by Dolinski
 - generated levels of obedience higher than the original Milgram experiment
 - VIRTUAL MIDAS "TOUCH" → Touching someone's arm increases compliance



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UPFRONT

More shocking results: New research replicates Milgram's findings



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Nearly 50 years after the controversial Milgram experiments, social psychologist Jerry M. Burger, PhD, has found that people are still just as willing to administer what they believe are painful electric shocks to others when urged on by an authority figure.

Burger, a professor at Santa Clara University, replicated one of the famous obedience experiments of the late Stanley Milgram, PhD, and found that compliance rates in the replication were only slightly lower than those found by Milgram. And, like Milgram, he found no difference in the rates of obedience between men and women.

"People learning about Milgram's work often wonder whether results would be any different today," Burger says. "Many point to the lessons of the Holocaust and argue that there is greater societal awareness of the dangers of blind obedience. But what I found is the same situational factors that affected obedience in Milgram's experiments still operate today."

Stanley Milgram, PhD, was an assistant professor at Yale in 1961 when he conducted the first in a series of experiments in which subjects—thinking they were testing the effect of punishment on learning—administered what they believed were increasingly powerful electric shocks to another person in a separate room. An authority figure conducting the experiment prodded the first person, who was assigned the role of "teacher," to continue shocking the other person, who was playing the role of "learner." In reality, both the authority figure and the learner were in on the real intent of the experiment, and the imposing-looking shock generator machine was a fake.

Milgram found that, after hearing the learner's first cries of pain at 150 volts, 82.5 percent of participants continued administering shocks; of those, 79 percent continued to the shock generator's end, at 450 volts. In Burger's replication, 70 percent of the participants had to be

