

# The milgrim experiment



In the early 1960's, Dr. Stanley Milgram conducted ground-breaking work and experiments in the areas of social psychology, including social influence as well as obedience to authority. Though his experiments have since caused questions in the field of ethics, powerful conclusions were reached, such as the willingness of humans to submit to and obey authority figures even when they consciously knew that their actions were causing harm to others. In the year 2010, many of those findings are still relevant, and show themselves in the basis of military actions as well as the growing generation of youngsters and teenagers when it comes to the factors of social influence, obedience to authority, and ethics.

Social influence has always been a factor of society, and Milgram's research into conformity is still relevant today. Children, teenagers especially, are eager to conform and look, dress, and act like each other. Peer pressure is rampant; the idea that one must 'go along with' the crowd in order to succeed is still felt. An important example is one that includes harmful activities such as smoking and drinking. When pressured, a teen is more likely to go along with the crowd that is smoking and drinking, believing that unless he or she follows them, ridicule and an otherwise painful life alone without any friends will occur.

Though there has never been any question that the military itself is based on authority and willingness to follow the orders of those in authority, Milgram's work is still seen in action today. In "The Milgram Experiment", he documented the response of participants to following orders given to them and their willingness to carry them out, even when they knew that it would potentially inflict harm on others. This is seen today in the reports coming from various military sources such as the Abu-Graib prison, in which military

members are still strongly asserting that they were given and were just following orders during the times that they performed acts on the prisoners that would lead to possibly severe psychological scarring.

Ethics is frequently brought front and center when it deals with Dr. Milgram's experiments. It is without question that Dr. Milgram himself had ethics; his experiments were actually designed to conclude with proof the statements of the criminals made at the Nazi war crimes hearings, in that they were simply " following orders" when they performed their crimes. During Milgram's experiments, no actual human beings were harmed, even though those taking part in the experiments did not know that at the time. Though no ethics were compromised at the time of the experiments, his research has led others to question their ethics in regards to research, and bring to light ethical questions when it comes to the practices being used the military as well as schools. Bullying, once seen as a rite of passage and something that every child had to deal with on his or her own level, has now been deemed unethical as well as socially harmful, and those that practice things such as hazing and/or bullying are dealt with severely. Though obedience to teacher is still the norm inside of educational facilities, teachers are no longer allowed to do anything that might harm the student socially, such as standing them in the corner or slapping their hand with a ruler. Inside of the military, practices that are questionable are called unethical (such as the inhumane treatment and torture of prisoners), and therefore disallowed. It is without argument that Milgram's research, while called questionable by some in the field of ethics, has served to prove that factors in society such as conformity and obedience to authority are still alive and well today. Peer pressure, conformity, and the desire to " be one of the crowd" will possibly

never change, along with the desire to please those that are in a position of authority to reward those that are not.