

Article review on milgrams obedience experiment and the nature of the holocaust

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According to Milgram's (1963) findings authorities have substantial power over individuals, and his findings can explain the nature of the holocaust as a consequence of enforced obedience. Blass (1999) argues that obedience rates have not declined since the original experiment, so any attempt to reproduce the experiment will probably result in similar findings. While moral convictions change over time, obedience remains consistent, so it is possible to conclude that people lose their moral convictions and personal decision-making abilities once they are exposed to pressure from the authorities.

The experiment was repeated several times in different societies with different cultural backgrounds, but the findings were consistent in all cultures (Blass, 1999). According to Blass (1999) the percentages among those experiments varied, but the choice between obedience and breaking social norms results in too much anxiety, so most individuals choose to be obedient. With those findings, it is possible to conclude that experiments in obedience can explain how the holocaust and similar events take place.

On the other hand, Campbell and Sedikides (1999) suggest that obedience is not the issue. Instead, self-serving bias is considered a natural reaction to situations in which individuals experience self-threat. Because of the natural inclination to avoid personal responsibility and negative consequences, people use self-serving bias to preserve their public image.

However, self-serving bias cannot be used to explain the nature of the holocaust or deny the role of obedience in similar events. The role of self-serving bias is to protect self-esteem by attributing personal failure to external factors. Obedience does not protect self-esteem. Its role is to encourage self-preservation in situations when the pressure from external

influences is stronger than personal resilience. Because the authorities can apply significant pressure on individual moral values, it is possible that people chose obedience and accepted the holocaust in exchange for self-preservation.

References

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