

The perils of obedience by stanley milgram

[Experience](#), [Human Nature](#)



In "The Perils of Obedience" by Stanley Milgram, Milgram explains that obedience is a natural occurring behavior, which acts on instinct ignoring a person's ethics, sympathy, and moral conduct (Milgram 343). In this experiment two people come into the laboratory where they are told they will be taking part in a study of memory and learning. One subject is the "teacher" and the other is the "learner". The teacher is asked to read a list of simple word pairs.

If the learner does not remember the word pair the teacher was instructed to send out electric shocks of increasing intensity as punishment to the learner. Whereas, "The Stanford Prison Experiment" by Philip Zimbardo is an essay which explains why society has a need to "learn" to become compliant and authoritarian (Zimbardo 363). Zimbardo created a mock prison setting consisting of ten prisoners and eleven guards. They were instructed to take over the role of guards and prisoners. Zimbardo wanted to test the effect that prison has on guards and prisoners.

Milgram and Zimbardo were both interested in how people obey under authoritative circumstances, using "fake" settings to test obedience; however the writers differ in the seriousness of the fight for individuality and the use of reality. Under any given circumstance people tend to obey authority differently. Milgram tested this theory out by putting his volunteers into a laboratory setting and having them press a button shocking the other person for a wrong answer. The majority of Milgram's volunteers went through the experiment, not wanting to disobey the authority figure.

Milgram stated, " The essence of obedience is that a person comes to view himself as the instrument for carrying out another person's wishes, and he therefore no longer regards himself as responsible for his actions (Milgram 354). " With Zimbardo's volunteers they sought out to dispense order and receive orders. Since Zimbardo's volunteers knew that they would be able to leave the prison and that it was not real, the experiment had no true effect. Real prisoners know that they are in for a long time and not just 14 days. However, in just six days and six nights their experiment was ended.

The experiment got away from dealing with the intellectual exercise and started dealing with the psychological mishaps. " If normal, young, healthy, educated men could so radically transformed under... a " prisonenvironment"... in so short of a time,... then one can shudder to imagine what society is doing both to the actual guards and prisoners... (Zimbardo 374). " Milgram's experiment was in a fake setting because the subjects were not likely to act in that behavior since the setting was not a reality situation. Being in a laboratory trying to test out obedience is not normal.

Humans tend to act differently out in the real world. " The studies of obedience cannot meaningfully be carried out in a laboratory setting, since obedience occurred in a context where it is appropriate. (Milgram 362) Take for instance the Adolf Hitler era. Testing done other than by naturalobservationis merely a reflection of what is expected to happen. Zimbardo's prison setting was not ideal to a real prison nor real criminals. "... t is impossible to separate what each individual brings into the prison from

what the prison brings out in each person. (Zimbardo 365) Volunteers knew that would be set free after a given date.

The volunteers in Milgram's experiment were fighting their subconscious minds. The person had complete power over the other individual, whom he could punish whenever he saw fit. The subject had to decide if what they were doing was right (causing pain to another). They were not fighting for their own individuality because they still had that. Zimbardo's prisoners were fighting for their individuality. Subjects were taken from the streets and thrown into a prison where all their rights as citizens were taken away.