

Milgram study



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The world came to know about the kind of research that Stanley Milgram had just started to explore in 1963 when he started to make his experiments known to the public. One of the major consequences of his studies was the development and establishment of ethics in research especially those involving human subjects. However, that became more like a serendipitous outcome of an entirely different pursuit in studying behavior.

What Milgram set out to study was the issue of obedience in retrospect of the Holocaust and the probable reasons that many people then under the Nazi regime followed orders that were inhuman or barbaric. It was approximately around the investigation of Adolf Eichmann who manned the Gestapo persecutions during the said Holocaust; this person had to face charges of genocide which was held in Jerusalem (Milgram, 1963).

The experiment involved what Milgram called the learner, the teacher and the experimenter who authorized the course and duration of the study. The learner is the person who actually was employed to help the experiment (assumingly with the consent and guidance of Milgram). The "naïve" or innocent person (the learner) will work with the same group of people but one who was actually a good actor. The teachers will conduct the tasks assigned to him about the memory exercise he was to supervise which was the learner will be able to accomplish; later an evaluation takes place of what that person (the learner) may have retained. If the learner commits mistakes, varied or graduated shocks were to be applied with matching painful and agonizing sounds that can be heard (Morris & Maisto, 1999).

The experiment showed that despite attempts by the learner to communicate to the teacher/volunteer that the painful shocks should be

stopped, whenever the experimenter (e. g. Milgram) was asked about stopping the treatment and the latter affirming that this was a part of the experiment, an overwhelming approximately 65% continued administering the shocks. What was even astounding was that when the person playacting as if in sheer agony and even almost dying or breathless, the teacher continued to administer these shocks which were increasing in intensity (Morris & Maisto, 1999).

What were the implications of the study? An important lesson could be gaining insight as to people's reasons why they may subject other people who were innocent to these painful episodes. Like the SS men of Eichmann during the captivity of the Jews in the early 40s, men who were deeply religious to a large degree, obey the orders despite what have been obvious clashes of understanding (Morris & Maisto, 1999). Authority figures cannot be denied as people who ought to be listened. Factors for a brief view on the implications point to people's previous upbringing or how they were inculcated on by caregivers and figures who acted as people in authority and the value of obedience.

Works cited:

Milgram, Stanley. Behavioral study of obedience. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, (1963). 67, 371-378.

Morris, Charles & Albert A. Maisto. *Understanding psychology*, 4th ed. Prentice hall, Inc. USA. (1999).