

Summary of stanley milgram's obedience study

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Megan Randolph RC 250 Marcia Clay 11/3/09 A Summary of Stanley Milgram's Obedience Study Stanley Milgram, a professor of social psychology, conducted a research study beginning in July of 1961. This research measured the willingness of participants to either obey or disobey an authority figuring giving them on a conflict between obedience to authority and personal conscience. Milgram set up this experiment at Yale University to test how much pain an ordinary citizen would inflict on another person just because an experimental scientist ordered him to.

Virtually one thousand adults were observed in this experiment, and several different conditions were launched to find a limit to which the candidate would continue the order from the experimenter or refuse the order and end the experiment. This experiment consisted of a triangle, beginning with the experimenter, which was the authority, the executant, which was the participant, and the victim, which was the learner. Both learner and teacher were given a sample 45-volt electric shock from an apparatus attached to a chair into which the "actor-learner" was to be strapped.

The fictitious story given to the "teachers" was that the experiment was intended to explore the effects of punishment for incorrect responses on learning behavior. The participants were first paid to participate in the experiment making it feel more real. A progression of unrevealed subjects in their roles as teacher were given simple memory tasks in the form of reading lists of two word pairs. The teacher then asked the "learner" to read them back and was instructed to administer a shock by pressing a button each time the learner made a mistake.

It was understood that the electric shocks were to be increased by 15 volts in intensity for each mistake the "learner" made during the experiment, while the actor/learner screamed and yelled louder every time. The participant believed that for every wrong answer, the learner was receiving actual shocks. In fact, there was a pre-determined script that the teacher had no idea about. The idea that the subject thought these shocks were actually taking place, and they continued to follow the orders, is where the experiment became disturbing.

This experiment, testing the willingness of normal people to carry out unethical acts, was life changing in how Milgram viewed the larger culture, for the worse. Milgram stated after completing the experiment, "... the most fundamental lesson of our study: ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process. " " This is scary, this is the definition of our greater public, and it's all shown through this Behavioral Study of Obedience," states Milgram.

Sixty five percent of participants made it to the final 450-volt shock in Milgram's first study. Milgram tested the experiment in four different ways of the immediacy of the victim. Beginning with the first condition, the victim was placed in another room and could not be seen or heard by the participant, only pounding on the wall when volts reached over 300. This condition was titled remote feedback, and was revealed to be easier for the participant to continue the experiment without remorse.

The second condition is where the voice protests were commenced and the teacher could hear the victim's complaints titled voice feedback. Although

they could hear the learner, the victims were still easily put out of mind because they could not be seen. The third experimental condition, Milgram placed the victim in the same room as the participant, being both visible and audible, the proximity. When the victim was close it was more difficult to exclude him, making it more difficult for the participants to obey the experimenter.

Lastly, the fourth condition was the touch proximity, where the victim received a shock only when his hand rested on the shock plate. When the victim would refused to place his hand on the plate, the experimenter would order the participant to come in physical contact with the victim and force his hand onto the plate. " The Mechanism of denial can no longer be brought into play" in the proximity conditions. It's not as easy to harm a person when you can visually see the pain one is inflicting. Forty adult subjects were studies in each condition.

The data revealed " that obedience was significantly reduced as the victim was rendered more immediate to the subject". According to Stanley Milgram's report *Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority*, there are many different factors they may affect the end result of a subjects obedience to a dominating figure. These factors include, the immediacy of the victim, closeness of authority, tensions, and background authority. The locality of each situation showed differences in the responses of the participant and their willingness to obey or disobey the experimenter.