

# The Milgram Obedience Experiment

*"The social psychology of this century reveals a major lesson: often it is not so much the kind of person a man is as the kind of situation in which he finds himself that determines how he will act."* –Stanley Milgram, 1974

If a person in a position of authority ordered you to deliver a 400-volt electrical shock to another person, would you follow orders? Most people would answer this question with an adamant no, but Yale University psychologist [Stanley Milgram](#) conducted a series of obedience experiments during the 1960s that demonstrated surprising results. These experiments offer a powerful and disturbing look into the power of authority and obedience.

## Introduction to the Milgram Experiment

Milgram started his experiments in 1961, shortly after the trial of the World War II criminal Adolph Eichmann had begun. Eichmann's defense that he was simply following instructions when he ordered the deaths of millions of Jews roused Milgram's interest. In his 1974 book *Obedience to Authority*, Milgram posed the question, "Could it be that Eichmann and his million accomplices in the Holocaust were just following orders? Could we call them all accomplices?"

## Method Used in the Milgram Experiment

The participants in the Milgram experiment were 40 men recruited using newspaper ads. In exchange for their participation, each person was paid \$4.50.

Milgram developed an intimidating shock generator, with shock levels starting at 30 volts and increasing in 15-volt increments all the way up to 450 volts. The many switches were labeled with terms including "slight shock," "moderate shock" and "danger: severe shock." The final two switches were labeled simply with an ominous "XXX."

Each participant took the role of a "teacher" who would then deliver a shock to the "student" every time an incorrect answer was produced. While the participant believed that he was delivering real shocks to the student, the student was actually a confederate in the experiment who was simply pretending to be shocked.

As the experiment progressed, the participant would hear the learner plead to be released or even complain about a heart condition. Once the 300-volt level had been reached, the learner banged on the

wall and demanded to be released. Beyond this point, the learner became completely silent and refused to answer any more questions. The experimenter then instructed the participant to treat this silence as an incorrect response and deliver a further shock.

Most participants asked the experimenter whether they should continue. The experimenter issued a series of commands to prod the participant along:

1. "Please continue."
2. "The experiment requires that you continue."
3. "It is absolutely essential that you continue."
4. "You have no other choice, you must go on."

## **Results of the Milgram Experiment**

The level of shock that the participant was willing to deliver was used as the measure of obedience. How far do you think that most participants were willing to go? When Milgram posed this question to a group of Yale University students, it was predicted that no more than 3 out of 100 participants would deliver the maximum shock. In reality, 65% of the participants in Milgram's study delivered the maximum shocks.

Of the 40 participants in the study, 26 delivered the maximum shocks while 14 stopped before reaching the highest levels. It is important to note that many of the subjects became extremely agitated, distraught and angry at the experimenter. Yet they continued to follow orders all the way to the end.

Because of concerns about the amount of anxiety experienced by many of the participants, all subjects were debriefed at the end of the experiment to explain the procedures and the use of deception. However, many critics of the study have argued that many of the participants were still confused about the exact nature of the experiment. Milgram later surveyed the participants and found that 84% were glad to have participated, while only 1% regretted their involvement.

## **Discussion of the Milgram Experiment**

While Milgram's research raised serious ethical questions about the use of human subjects in psychology experiments, his results have also been consistently replicated in further experiments. Thomas Blass (1999) reviewed further research on obedience and found that Milgram's findings hold true in other experiments.

Why did so many of the participants in this experiment perform a seemingly sadistic act on the instruction

of an authority figure? According to Milgram, there are a number of situational factors that can explain such high levels of obedience:

- The physical presence of an authority figure dramatically increased [compliance](#).
- The fact that the study was sponsored by Yale (a trusted and authoritative academic institution) led many participants to believe that the experiment must be safe.
- The selection of teacher and learner status seemed random.
- Participants assumed that the experimenter was a competent expert.
- The shocks were said to be painful, not dangerous.

Later experiments conducted by Milgram indicated that the presence of rebellious peers dramatically reduced obedience levels. When other people refused to go along with the experimenters orders, 36 out of 40 participants refused to deliver the maximum shocks.

"Ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process. Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority" (Milgram, 1974).

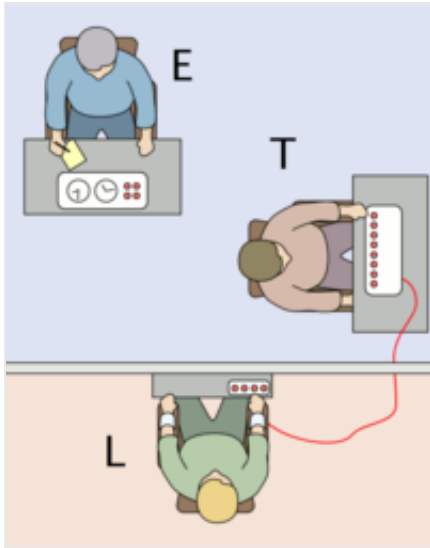
Milgram's experiment has become a classic in psychology, demonstrating the dangers of obedience. While this experiment suggests that situational variables have a stronger sway than personality factors in determining obedience, other psychologists argue that obedience is heavily influenced by both external and internal factors, such as personal beliefs and overall temperament.

### **Suggested Reading:**

Milgram, S. (1973). The perils of obedience. Harper's Magazine, 62-77.

Milgram, S. (1974). Obedience to authority: An experimental view. Harpercollins

# Milgram experiment



The **Milgram experiment on obedience to authority figures** was a series of [social psychology experiments](#) conducted by [Yale University psychologist Stanley Milgram](#), which measured the willingness of study participants to [obey](#) an [authority figure](#) who instructed them to perform acts that conflicted with their personal [conscience](#). Milgram first described his research in 1963 in an article published in the *[Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology](#)*,<sup>[1]</sup> and later discussed his findings in greater depth in his 1974 book, *[Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View](#)*.<sup>[2]</sup>

The experiments began in July 1961, three months after the start of the trial of German [Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann](#) in [Jerusalem](#). Milgram devised his psychological study to answer the popular question at that particular time: "Could it be that Eichmann and his million accomplices in [the Holocaust](#) were just following orders? Could we call them all accomplices?"<sup>[3]</sup> The experiments have been repeated many times in the following years with consistent results within differing societies, although not with the same percentages across the globe.<sup>[4]</sup> The experiments were also controversial, and considered by some scientists to be unethical and physically or psychologically abusive. Psychologist [Diana Baumrind](#) considered the experiment "harmful because it may cause permanent psychological damage and cause people to be less trusting in the future."<sup>[5]</sup>

## The experiment



Three individuals were involved: the one running the experiment, the subject of the experiment (a volunteer), and a [confederate](#) pretending to be a volunteer. These three people fill three distinct roles: the Experimenter (an authoritative role), the Teacher (a role intended to obey the orders of the Experimenter), and the Learner (the recipient of stimulus from the Teacher). The subject and the actor both drew slips of paper to determine their roles, but unknown to the subject, both slips said "teacher". The actor would always claim to have drawn the slip that read "learner", thus guaranteeing that the subject would always be the "teacher". At this point, the "teacher" and "learner" were separated into different rooms where they could communicate but not see each other. In one version of the experiment, the confederate was sure to mention to the participant that he had a [heart condition](#).<sup>[1]</sup>

The "teacher" was given an [electric shock](#) from the electro-shock generator as a sample of the shock that the "learner" would supposedly receive during the experiment. The "teacher" was then given a list of word pairs which he was to teach the learner. The teacher began by reading the list of word pairs to the learner. The teacher would then read the first word of each pair and read four possible answers. The learner would press a button to indicate his response. If the answer was incorrect, the teacher would administer a shock to the learner, with the voltage increasing in 15-[volt](#) increments for each wrong answer. If correct, the teacher would read the next word pair.<sup>[1]</sup>

The subjects believed that for each wrong answer, the learner was receiving actual shocks. In reality, there were no shocks. After the confederate was separated from the subject, the confederate set up a tape recorder integrated with the electro-shock generator, which played pre-recorded sounds for each shock level. After a number of voltage level increases, the actor started to bang on the wall that separated him from the subject. After several times banging on the wall and complaining about his heart condition, all responses by the learner would cease.<sup>[1]</sup>

At this point, many people indicated their desire to stop the experiment and check on the learner. Some test subjects paused at 135 volts and began to question the purpose of the experiment. Most continued after being assured that they would not be held responsible. A few subjects began to laugh nervously or exhibit other signs of extreme stress once they heard the screams of pain coming from the learner.<sup>[1]</sup>

If at any time the subject indicated his desire to halt the experiment, he was given a succession of verbal prods by the experimenter, in this order:<sup>[1]</sup>

1. Please *continue*.
2. The experiment requires that you *continue*.
3. It is absolutely essential that you *continue*.
4. You have no other choice, you *must* go on.

If the subject still wished to stop after all four successive verbal prods, the experiment was halted. Otherwise, it was halted after the subject had given the maximum 450-volt shock three times in succession.<sup>[1]</sup>

The experimenter also gave special prods if the teacher made specific comments. If the teacher asked whether the learner might suffer permanent physical harm, the experimenter replied, "Although the shocks may be painful, there is no permanent tissue damage, so please go on." If the teacher said that the learner clearly wants to stop, the experimenter replied, "Whether the learner likes it or not, you must go on until he has learned all the word pairs correctly, so please go on."

## Results

Before conducting the experiment, Milgram polled fourteen Yale University senior-year psychology majors to predict the behavior of 100 hypothetical teachers. All of the poll respondents believed that only a very small fraction of teachers (the range was from zero to 3 out of 100, with an average of 1.2) would be prepared to inflict the maximum voltage. Milgram also informally polled his colleagues and found that

they, too, believed very few subjects would progress beyond a very strong shock.<sup>[1]</sup> Milgram also polled forty psychiatrists from a medical school and they believed that by the tenth shock, when the victim demands to be free, most subjects would stop the experiment. They predicted that by the 300 volt shock, when the victim refuses to answer, only 3.73 percent of the subjects would still continue and they believed that "only a little over one-tenth of one percent of the subjects would administer the highest shock on the board."<sup>[6]</sup>

In Milgram's first set of experiments, 65 percent (26 of 40)<sup>[1]</sup> of experiment participants administered the experiment's final massive 450-volt shock, though many were very uncomfortable doing so; at some point, every participant paused and questioned the experiment; some said they would refund the money they were paid for participating in the experiment. Throughout the experiment, subjects displayed varying degrees of tension and stress. Subjects were sweating, trembling, stuttering, biting their lips, groaning, digging their fingernails into their skin, and some were even having nervous laughing fits or seizures.<sup>[1]</sup>

Milgram summarized the experiment in his 1974 article, "The Perils of Obedience", writing:

The legal and philosophic aspects of [obedience](#) are of enormous importance, but they say very little about how most people behave in concrete situations. I set up a simple experiment at Yale University to test how much [pain](#) an ordinary citizen would inflict on another person simply because he was ordered to by an experimental scientist. Stark authority was pitted against the subjects' [participants'] strongest moral imperatives against hurting others, and, with the subjects' [participants'] ears ringing with the screams of the victims, authority won more often than not. The extreme willingness of adults to go to almost any lengths on the command of an authority constitutes the chief finding of the study and the fact most urgently demanding explanation.

Ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process. Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority.<sup>[7]</sup>

The original Simulated Shock Generator and Event Recorder, or *shock box*, is located in the [Archives of the History of American Psychology](#).

Later, Milgram and other psychologists performed variations of the experiment throughout the world, with similar results.<sup>[8]</sup> Milgram later investigated the effect of the experiment's locale on obedience levels by holding an experiment in an unregistered, backstreet office in a bustling city, as opposed to at Yale, a respectable university. The level of obedience, "although somewhat reduced, was not significantly lower." What made more of a difference was the proximity of the "learner" and the experimenter. There were also variations tested involving groups.

Thomas Blass of the [University of Maryland, Baltimore County](#) performed a [meta-analysis](#) on the results of repeated performances of the experiment. He found that the percentage of participants who are prepared to inflict fatal voltages remains remarkably constant, 61–66 percent, regardless of time or place.<sup>[9][10]</sup>

There is a little-known factoid about the Milgram Experiment, reported by [Philip Zimbardo](#): none of the participants who refused to administer the final shocks insisted that the experiment itself be terminated, nor left the room to check the health of the victim without requesting permission to leave, as per Milgram's notes and recollections, when Zimbardo asked him about that point.<sup>[11]</sup>

Milgram created a documentary film titled *Obedience* showing the experiment and its results. He also produced a series of five social psychology films, some of which dealt with his experiments.<sup>[12]</sup>

## Criticism

### Ethics

The Milgram Shock Experiment raised questions about the [research ethics](#) of scientific experimentation because of the extreme emotional stress and [inflicted insight](#) suffered by the participants. In Milgram's defense, 84 percent of former participants surveyed later said they were "glad" or "very glad" to have participated, 15 percent chose neutral responses (92% of all former participants responding).<sup>[13]</sup> Many later wrote expressing thanks. Milgram repeatedly received offers of assistance and requests to join his staff from former participants. Six years later (at the height of the [Vietnam War](#)), one of the participants in the experiment sent correspondence to Milgram, explaining why he was glad to have participated despite the stress:

While I was a subject in 1964, though I believed that I was hurting someone, I was totally unaware of why I was doing so. Few people ever realize when they are acting according to their own beliefs and when they are meekly submitting to authority... To permit myself to be [drafted](#)



with the understanding that I am submitting to authority's demand to do something very wrong would make me frightened of myself... I am fully prepared to go to jail if I am not granted [Conscientious Objector](#) status. Indeed, it is the only course I could take to be faithful to what I believe. My only hope is that members of my board act equally according to their conscience...<sup>[14]</sup>  
<sup>[15]</sup>

Milgram argued that the ethical criticism provoked by his experiments was because his findings were disturbing and revealed unwelcome truths about [human nature](#). Others have argued that the ethical debate has diverted attention from more serious problems with the experiment's [methodology](#). Author Gina Perry found<sup>[[citation needed](#)]</sup> an unpublished paper in Milgram's archives that shows Milgram's own concern with how believable the experimental set-up was to subjects involved. Milgram's unpublished analysis indicated that many subjects suspected that the experiment was a [hoax](#), a finding that casts doubt on the veracity of his results. In the journal [Jewish Currents](#), Joseph Dimow, a participant in the 1961 experiment at Yale University, wrote about his early withdrawal as a "teacher," suspicious "that the whole experiment was designed to see if ordinary Americans would obey immoral orders, as many Germans had done during the Nazi period."<sup>[16]</sup>

## Applicability to Holocaust

Milgram sparked direct critical response in the scientific community by claiming that "a common psychological process is centrally involved in both [his laboratory experiments and Nazi Germany] events." Professor [James Waller](#), Chair of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Keene State College, formerly Chair of Whitworth College Psychology Department, expressed the opinion that Milgram experiments *do not correspond well* to the Holocaust events:<sup>[17]</sup>

1. The subjects of Milgram experiments, wrote James Waller (*Becoming Evil*), were assured in advance, that *no permanent physical damage would result from their actions*. However, the Holocaust perpetrators were fully aware of their hands-on killing and maiming of the victims.
2. The laboratory subjects themselves did not know their victims and were not motivated by racism. On the other hand, the Holocaust perpetrators displayed an *intense devaluation of the victims* through a lifetime of personal development.
3. Those serving punishment at the lab were not sadists, nor hate-mongers, and often *exhibited great anguish and conflict* in the experiment, unlike the designers and executioners of the Final Solution (see [Holocaust trials](#)) who had a clear "goal" on their hands, set beforehand.
4. The experiment lasted for an hour, with no time for the subjects to *contemplate the implications of*

*their behavior*. Meanwhile, the Holocaust lasted for years with ample time for a moral assessment of all individuals and organizations involved.<sup>[17]</sup>

In the opinion of Thomas Blass, who is the author of scholarly monograph on the experiment (*The Man Who Shocked The World*) published in 2004, the historical evidence pertaining to actions of the Holocaust perpetrators speaks louder than words:

Milgram's approach does not provide a fully adequate explanation of the Holocaust. While it may well account for the dutiful destructiveness of the dispassionate bureaucrat who may have shipped Jews to Auschwitz with the same degree of routinization as potatoes to Bremenhaven, it falls short when one tries to apply it to the more zealous, inventive, and hate-driven atrocities that also characterized the Holocaust.<sup>[18]</sup>

## Charges of data manipulation

After an investigation of the test, Australian psychologist Gina Perry<sup>[19]</sup> claimed that Milgram had manipulated his results. "Overall, over half disobeyed," said Ms Perry. Of those that obeyed, there were on one occasion many more than four promptings, but 26 times before doing it.<sup>[20]</sup> Several times in fact some subjects asked to swap places with the learner. Gina Perry further claims that some subjects thought it was not real but a reality TV show.<sup>[21][22]</sup>

## Interpretations

Professor Milgram elaborated two theories

- The first is the *theory of conformism*, based on [Solomon Asch conformity experiments](#), describing the fundamental relationship between the group of reference and the individual person. A subject who has neither ability nor expertise to make decisions, especially in a crisis, will leave decision making to the group and its hierarchy. The group is the person's behavioral model.
- The second is the *agentic state theory*, wherein, per Milgram, "the essence of obedience consists in the fact that a person comes to view themselves as the instrument for carrying out another person's wishes, and they therefore no longer see themselves as responsible for their actions. Once this critical shift of viewpoint has occurred in the person, all of the essential features of obedience follow".<sup>[23]</sup>

## Alternative interpretations

In his book *Irrational Exuberance*, Yale Finance Professor [Robert Shiller](#) argues that other factors might be partially able to explain the Milgram Experiments:

[People] have learned that when experts tell them something is all right, it probably is, even if it does not seem so. (In fact, it is worth noting that in this case the experimenter was indeed correct: it was all right to continue giving the 'shocks' — even though most of the subjects did not suspect the reason.)<sup>[24]</sup>

In a 2006 experiment, a computerized [avatar](#) was used in place of the learner receiving electrical shocks. Although the participants administering the shocks were aware that the learner was unreal, the experimenters reported that participants responded to the situation physiologically "as if it were real."<sup>[25]</sup>

For a 2009 episode of the [BBC](#) science documentary series *Horizon*, the Milgram experiment was replicated. Of the 12 participants, only three refused to continue to the end of the experiment. Speaking during the episode, social psychologist Clifford Stott discussed the influence that the idealism of scientific enquiry had on the volunteers. He remarked: "The influence is ideological. It's about what they believe science to be, that science is a positive product, it produces beneficial findings and knowledge to society that are helpful for society. So there's that sense of science is providing some kind of system for good."<sup>[26]</sup>

## Replications and variations

### Milgram's variations

In *[Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View](#)* (1974), Milgram describes 19 variations of his experiment, some of which had not been previously reported.

Several experiments varied the immediacy of the teacher and learner. Generally, when the victim's physical immediacy was increased, the participant's [compliance](#) decreased. The participant's compliance also decreased when the authority's physical immediacy decreased (Experiments 1–4). For example, in Experiment 2, where participants received telephonic instructions from the experimenter, compliance decreased to 21 percent. Interestingly, some participants deceived the experimenter by *pretending* to continue the experiment. In the variation where the "learner's" physical immediacy was closest, where participants had to physically hold the "learner's" arm onto a shock plate, compliance decreased. Under that condition, 30 percent of participants completed the experiment.

In Experiment 8, women were the participants; previously, all participants had been men. Obedience did

not significantly differ, though the women communicated experiencing higher levels of stress.

Experiment 10 took place in a modest office in [Bridgeport, Connecticut](#), purporting to be the commercial entity "Research Associates of Bridgeport" without apparent connection to Yale University, to eliminate the university's prestige as a possible factor influencing the participants' behavior. In those conditions, obedience dropped to 47.5 percent, though the difference was not statistically significant.

Milgram also combined the effect of authority with that of [conformity](#). In those experiments, the participant was joined by one or two additional "teachers" (also actors, like the "learner"). The behavior of the participants' peers strongly affected the results. In Experiment 17, when two additional teachers refused to comply, only 4 of 40 participants continued in the experiment. In Experiment 18, the participant performed a subsidiary task (reading the questions via microphone or recording the learner's answers) with another "teacher" who complied fully. In that variation, 37 of 40 continued with the experiment.<sup>[27]</sup>

## Replications

Around the time of the release of *Obedience to Authority* (i.e. 1973–1974), a version of the experiment was conducted at La Trobe university in Australia. As reported by Gina Perry in *Behind the Shock Machine*,<sup>[28]</sup> some of the participants experienced long-lasting psychological effects, possibly due to the lack of proper debriefing by the experimenter.<sup>[29]</sup>

In 2002 the British artist [Rod Dickinson](#) created *The Milgram Re-enactment*, an exact reconstruction of parts of the original experiment, including the rooms used, lighting and uniforms. An audience watched the four-hour performance through one-way glass windows.<sup>[30][31]</sup> A video of this performance was first shown at the CCA Gallery in [Glasgow](#) in 2002.

A partial replication of the Milgram experiment was staged by British psychological illusionist [Derren Brown](#) and broadcast on Channel 4 in the UK in *The Heist* (2006).<sup>[32]</sup>

Another partial replication of the Milgram experiment was conducted by Jerry M. Burger in 2006 and broadcast on the Primetime series *Basic Instincts*. Burger noted that, "current standards for the ethical treatment of participants clearly place Milgram's studies out of bounds." In 2009 Burger was able to receive approval from the [institutional review board](#) by modifying several of the experimental protocols.

<sup>[33]</sup> Burger found obedience rates virtually identical to what Milgram found in 1961–1962, even while

meeting current ethical regulations of informing participants. In addition, half the replication participants were female, and their rate of obedience was virtually identical to that of the male participants. Burger also included a condition in which participants first saw another participant refuse to continue. However, participants in this condition obeyed at the same rate as participants in the base condition.<sup>[34]</sup>

In the 2010 French documentary, *[Le Jeu de la Mort](#)* (*The Game of Death*), researchers recreated the Milgram experiment with an added critique of [reality television](#) by presenting the scenario as a [game show](#) pilot. Volunteers were given €40 and told they would not win any money from the game, as this was only a trial. Only 16 of 80 "contestants" (teachers) chose to end the game before delivering the highest voltage punishment.<sup>[35][36]</sup>

The experiment was performed on the April 25th, 2010 episode of *[Dateline NBC](#)*.

The [Discovery Channel](#) aired the "How Evil are You" segment of *[Curiosity](#)* which aired on October 30, 2011. The episode was hosted by [Eli Roth](#) who got similar results to the original Milgram experiment.<sup>[37]</sup>

Due to increasingly widespread knowledge of the experiment, recent replications of Milgram's procedure had to ensure that the participants were not previously aware of it.

## Other variations

Charles Sheridan and Richard King hypothesized that some of Milgram's subjects may have suspected that the victim was faking, so they repeated the experiment with a real victim: a "cute, fluffy puppy" who was given real, albeit apparently harmless, electric shocks. They found similar findings to Milgram: half of the male subjects and all of the females obeyed to the end. Many subjects showed high levels of distress during the experiment and some openly wept. In addition, Sheridan and King found that the duration for which the shock button was pressed decreased as the shocks got higher, meaning that for higher shock levels, subjects showed more hesitance towards delivering the shocks.<sup>[38][39]</sup>

## Media depictions

- *Obedience* is a black-and-white film of the experiment, shot by Milgram himself. It is distributed by [Alexander Street Press](#).<sup>[40]</sup>
- *[The Tenth Level](#)* was a 1975 [CBS](#) television film about the experiment, featuring [William Shatner](#), [Ossie Davis](#), and [John Travolta](#).<sup>[10][41]</sup>
- *[I as in Icarus](#)* is a 1979 French conspiracy thriller with [Yves Montand](#) as an attorney investigating

the assassination of the President. The movie is inspired by the [Kennedy assassination](#) and the subsequent [Warren Commission](#) investigation. Digging into the psychology of the [Lee Harvey Oswald](#) type character, the attorney finds out the "decoy shooter" participated in the Milgram experiment. The ongoing experiment is presented to the unsuspecting attorney.

- Referenced in [Alan Moore's \*V for Vendetta\*](#), as a reason why Dr. Surridge has lost faith in humanity.
- *Atrocity* is a 2005 film re-enactment of the Milgram Experiment.<sup>[42]</sup>
- *The Human Behavior Experiments* is a 2006 documentary by Alex Gibney about major experiments in social psychology, shown along with modern incidents highlighting the principles discussed. Along with [Stanley Milgram's](#) study in obedience, the documentary shows the '[diffusion of responsibility](#)' study of [John Darley](#) and [Bibb Latané](#) and the [Stanford Prison Experiment](#) of [Philip Zimbardo](#).
- [Chip Kidd's](#) 2008 novel *The Learners* is about the Milgram experiment, and features Stanley Milgram as a character.
- *The Milgram Experiment* is a 2009 film by the Brothers Gibbs which chronicles the story of Stanley Milgram's experiments.
- "Authority", an episode of [Law & Order: Special Victims Unit](#), features Merrit Rook, a suspect played by [Robin Williams](#), who employs the [strip search prank call scam](#), identifying himself as "Detective Milgram". He later reenacts a version of the Milgram experiment on Det. [Elliot Stabler](#) by ordering him to administer electric shocks to Det. [Olivia Benson](#), whom Rook has bound and is thus helpless.
- The 2010 film [Zenith](#) references and dramatically depicts the Milgram experiment
- The track "We Do What We're Told (Milgram's 37)" on [Peter Gabriel's](#) album [So](#) is a reference to Milgram's Experiment 18, in which 37 of 40 people were prepared to administer the highest level of shock.
- The [Dar Williams](#) song "Buzzer" is about the experiment. "I'm feeling sorry for this guy that I pressed to shock / He gets the answers wrong I have to up the watts / And he begged me to stop but they told me to go / I pressed the buzzer."
- Episode 114 of the [Howie Mandel](#) show [Howie Do It](#) repeated the experiment with a single pair of subjects using the premise of a Japanese game show.
- The second scene in the 1984 film "[Ghostbusters](#)"<sup>[43]</sup> shows Dr. Venkman shocking a human test subject during an [extrasensory perception](#) experiment. However, the primary purpose of Dr. Venkman's experiment was shocking only the male test subject, as a way to flirt with the attractive female test subject.



- A [Derren Brown](#) special named "[The Heist](#)" repeated the Milgram experiment to test whether the participants will take part in a staged heist afterwards.<sup>[44]</sup>
- The Discovery Channel's [Curiosity](#) TV series featured an episode where [Eli Roth](#) recreated the experiment asking the question, "50 years later, have we changed?"
- *Foolin Around* is a 1980 movie starring [Gary Busey](#) and [Annette O'Toole](#), which uses a Milgram experiment parody in a comedic scene.
- The video game *Fallout: New Vegas* contained a Vault, inspired by the Milgram experiment, which demanded the residents sacrifice one of their own once a year, and told they would be exterminated if they failed to comply.
- The 2012 film [Compliance](#), written and directed by Craig Zobel, shows a group of employees assisting in the interrogation of a young counter assistant at the commands of a person who claims to be a police officer over the phone, demonstrating the willingness of subjects to follow orders from authority figures.

## See also

## Notes

- <sup>^</sup>**  ***a b c d e f g h i j k***  Milgram, Stanley (1963). "[Behavioral Study of Obedience](#)". *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* **67** (4): 371–8. doi:10.1037/h0040525. PMID 14049516. as PDF.
- <sup>^</sup>** Milgram, Stanley (1974). *[Obedience to Authority; An Experimental View](#)*. Harpercollins. ISBN 0-06-131983-X.
- <sup>^</sup>** Search inside (2013). "[Could it be that Eichmann and his million accomplices in the Holocaust were just following orders? Could we call them all accomplices?](#)". Google Books. Retrieved 20 July 2013.
- <sup>^</sup>** Blass, Thomas (1991). "[Understanding behavior in the Milgram obedience experiment: The role of personality, situations, and their interactions](#)". *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* **60** (3): 398–413. doi:10.1037/0022-3514.60.3.398.
- <sup>^</sup>** Baumrind, Diana (1964). "Some Thoughts on Ethics of Research: After Reading Milgram's "Behavioral Study of Obedience". *American Psychologist* **19** (6): 421–423. doi:10.1037/h0040128.
- <sup>^</sup>** Milgram, Stanley (1965). "Some Conditions of Obedience and Disobedience to Authority". *Human Relations* **18** (1): 57–76. doi:10.1177/001872676501800105.
- <sup>^</sup>** Milgram, Stanley (1974). "[The Perils of Obedience](#)". *Harper's Magazine*. Archived from [the original](#) on 2011-05-14. Abridged and adapted from *Obedience to Authority*.