



Social Influence (2)

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Psych 1A – Social Psychology



THE UNIVERSITY
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We acknowledge and pay our respects to the Kaurna people,
the traditional custodians whose ancestral lands we gather on.

We acknowledge the deep feelings of attachment and relationship of the
Kaurna people to country and we respect and value their past, present
and ongoing connection to the land and cultural beliefs.

Length: 15m

Introduction

This presentation discusses social influence, particularly around obedience.

Learning Outcomes:

1. Learn about the controversial Milgram studies
2. Understand the conditions under which individuals blindly obey

The Milgram Studies

Original aim was to test Asch's conclusions in situations where conformity *really* mattered.

- Aimed to have confederates administer electric shocks to another person and observe whether the participant would conform.

These studies were influenced by the Nuremberg trials – “I was just following orders...”



The Milgram Studies

None of the tasks in
Milgram's Studies were
real – it was all fake!

Obedience:

- Form of compliance that occurs when people follow direct commands, usually from someone in a position of authority

In the **INITIAL BASELINE** trial, participants were lead to believe that they were administering actual electric shocks every time the 'learner' confederate got an answer wrong.

- 15V for first wrong answer, increasing by 15V each mistake
- 'Persuaded' to continue regardless of the level of shock



The Milgram Studies: Results

**None of the tasks in
Milgram's Studies were
real – it was all fake!**

110 experts predicted only 10% would exceed 180V.

But, almost all of the 40 participants went to 225V.

- When the learner couldn't be seen, 65% went to 450V (enough to kill)

Concluded that humans are inclined to obey authority figures, even when they believe that what they are doing is wrong.



The Milgram Studies: Issues

- Can findings really be generalised to the real world? Participants knew this was an experiment...
 - Therefore participants expected to follow orders
 - But, Milgram argues that this was the whole point
- Obviously also very unethical!

An alternative interpretation

- The Milgram Studies [and also Stanford Prison Experiment] led to the unhappy conclusion that humans tend to *inevitably obey, even when it is wrong*. BUT...
- Note that Milgram ran 30 subsequent studies and the majority of participants did not go so far as in the famous 'Baseline' study
- Is it possible that Ps went along not out of blind obedience but because they were led to believe in the importance of what they were doing?
- If so, perhaps the Milgram studies tell us less about human nature and more about the problems that arise when subordinates buy into a leader's twisted narrative



Summary

There is evidence that people tend to blindly obey authorities, although there may be limits to the extent to which this conclusion applies.

What will you do when put in a position where there is pressure to obey and you know its wrong?



make
history.

