Obedience to Authority

Socialization
• From an early age, we are taught “don’t ask why, just do as you are told”
• As a result, people often mindlessly follow orders even when they disagree with them
• The type of conformity that results is likely to be _______ (public or private?), but very powerful nonetheless

Obedience to Authority
• “Don’t Walk on the Black Squares” showed people from all walks of life following orders (the sign)
• But the person who first scientifically investigated the topic was __________________________
• As Solomon Asch’s student, he was astonished by the line estimation studies
• He was also Jewish, and deeply troubled by the _________ obedience to authority during WWII
• He set out to study this type of conformity in the laboratory
  – We’ll see the results today in the film, Obedience

Operationalization
• How to study obedience in the lab?
• To model the situation in Germany, he needed an authority figure, an underling, and a victim

Translation: The Teacher-Learner Paradigm
Fill in the middle column

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Milgram</th>
<th>WWII</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority Figure</td>
<td>SS Officers</td>
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<td>Underling</td>
<td>German Citizens</td>
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<tr>
<td>Victim</td>
<td>Jewish Citizens</td>
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Milgram’s Teacher-Learner Paradigm

• In Milgram’s research, teachers are ordered to administer the shocks

The dependent variable is ______________ (how many shocks are delivered under orders)

Predictions about Milgram’s study

• Milgram asked many experts to predict, in advance, whether people would obey an authority figure’s order to deliver shocks to a victim

• Of the psychologists he asked, ______________predicted he would find obedience

In Fact

• In his baseline research, Milgram found ______of his subjects obeyed the authority figure
• So he then decided to up the ante
• In the film we’ll see today, the “learner” has a heart condition, and the teacher is told that shocks can trigger heart attacks
• Milgram hoped this would decrease obedience considerably
• Let’s see if it did

Post-film

• Much to Milgram’s surprise, ______of his subjects “shocked the victim” all the way to the XXX level
• At this point, the victim has long since stopped responding, may be seriously injured or dead, yet people persisted in following orders – why?

The next slide is found in Myers

Milgram’s follow-up research

• Milgram focused on discovering the factors necessary for obedience to authority
• His follow-up research identified quite a few, starting with ______________
  – Maybe obedience was high b/c subjects could not hear or see the victim’s suffering
Victim Depersonalization

Victim Proximity:
• When the subject and victim were in the same room, obedience dropped to ________
• When the subject had to place the victim’s hand on the shock mechanism, obedience dropped to ________
• The victim is now “personalized” – emotional distance no longer possible
• In general, personalizing victims increases empathy
• Still, even personalizing the victim to the point of having them ______the Learner resulted in 30% obedience (still high) – so what else might affect obedience?

Experimenter ____________
• The experimenter also has to be near the subject
• If E was absent (e.g., tape-recorded), or giving instructions over the phone, obedience dropped to ________
• Interestingly, teachers _________about their obedience in these conditions

Need for Monitoring
• So what type of social power (in Kelman’s terms) do we have here?
• Compliance, Identification, or Internalization

Experimenter’s Legitimacy
• E also has to be a legitimate authority figure – someone sanctioned by society to give orders
• Milgram first tried moving the experiment off-campus (to diminish the authority that Yale might connote) – he found a small drop in obedience (______%)

However
• When E was replaced by a clerk, obedience dropped to ________
• In one version, the clerk tried to take over shocking the victim – many subjects tried to physically restrain him

Accountability*
• When subjects were told they were responsible for the learner, obedience was almost __________________ (_______)
• Thus, the authority figure has to take the blame for the consequences (i.e., be accountable)
• Accountability is the _______________factor for obedience to authority
Summary

• Milgram found 4 factors necessary to get the _______ of subjects to obey authority
• Victim Depersonalization
• Legitimate Authority Figure
• Authority Figure must be present
• **___________________________

“_________ State”

• Eliminating personal responsibility is a key factor
• Milgram said it allowed subjects to enter into an “_________ state” – a state where we are just an agency of a higher power
• Under this condition, it was easy to get subjects to become agents of destruction

Implications

• And this was in a democratic country, under laboratory conditions, where there was no cost to “teachers” for failure to obey
• Imagine how much easier it is get people to obey when they are ordered by the military or the government, and when there are costs for not obeying

• Although we would like to think that only bad people do bad things, this is an example of the _________________________

• With respect to WWII, this idea has come to be called “Eichmann’s fallacy”

Eichmann’s Fallacy

• Adolph Eichmann was the Nazi officer responsible for filling the death camps – He fled to Argentina, and wasn’t captured until 1961
• During his trial, people assumed they would discover _______________
  – Instead, they found a quiet, ordinary man who insisted he was only “following orders” to please his superiors and advance his career

The “ordinariness” of evil

• Has become one of the defining themes of Nazi Germany
• Evil does ______ require bad people
• Instead, ordinary people are capable of it when the situation sets the stage
• Milgram’s studies demonstrate this phenomenon
• As does Zimbardo’s ___________ study
Update on Milgram
• Research conducted in Milgram’s spirit today continues to show obedience to authority
• Any time people are in a position of lower status, they are prone to mindlessly follow orders

Examples
• Nurses followed doctor’s orders to the letter, even when it meant they were giving __________________________
• Subjects told by the “boss” to hire a White man over a better-qualified Black man did so ____________
• When we are not held accountable for our actions, we are likely to “do as we are told”

Ethics
• Milgram’s research (like Zimbardo’s prison study) caused a public outcry
• Social psychologists were also outraged
• So much so that today, you could not conduct these experiments

As you saw in the film
• Subjects were obviously distressed
• Many of them chain-smoked, laughed uncontrollably, sweated profusely, and expressed angst during the experiment
• But Milgram reports that ______% of them were glad to have participated in it
• Months later, an independent psychologist found none of them showed any evidence of harm

Do the ends justify the means?

The answer has been _______

What do YOU think?

A note about Obedience the film:

If you miss viewing it in class, you’ll just have to read about Milgram’s work in your text because I won’t be putting it on reserve at Kilmer Library. It’s simply too valuable, and I have had films lost or stolen in the past. Because this one is irreplaceable I won’t let it out of my sight.