The Milgram Behavioral Study of Obedience

Note: This description was taken verbatim from the following website on November 5, 2014: [http://psychology.about.com/od/historyofpsychology/a/milgram.htm](http://psychology.about.com/od/historyofpsychology/a/milgram.htm)

Introduction
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
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
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.
The Stanford Prison Experiment

Note: This description was taken verbatim from the following website on November 5, 2014: https://explorable.com/stanford-prison-experiment

Background
In 1971, the psychologist Philip Zimbardo tried to show that prison guards and convicts would tend to slip into predefined roles, behaving in a way that they thought was required, rather than using their own judgment and morals. Zimbardo was trying to show what happened when all of the individuality and dignity was stripped away from a human, and their life was completely controlled. He wanted show the dehumanization and loosening of social and moral values that can happen to guards immersed in such a situation.

Method
To conduct the Stanford Prison Experiment, Zimbardo constructed a mock correctional facility in the basement of Stanford University. Adverts were placed in local newspapers offering $15 per day for participants in this program. Of the 75 responses, the 24 male subjects judged to be most mentally and emotionally stable were selected. Mainly middle class and white, they were divided into two groups randomly, of 12 prisoners and 12 guards. The group selected to be the guards were outfitted in ‘military-style’ intimidating uniforms. They were also equipped with wooden batons and mirrored shades, to prevent eye-contact and make the guards appear less human. In an initiation meeting, Zimbardo, who acted as the warden for the duration of the experiment, informed the guards that the only rule was that no physical punishment was allowed. Other than that, the guards were to run the prison as they saw fit, and would be divided into regular working shifts and patterns. Prisoners, by contrast, were dressed in cheap smocks and were allowed no underwear. They were to be addressed by, and answer to, identity numbers only. They also had a small chain around one ankle to remind them that they were inmates in a correctional facility. Conditions were tough, with only basic sleeping mattresses and plain food being supplied. The prisoners were instructed to wait at home “to be called” for the start of the experiment; their homes were raided without any warning, arrested by the real local police department and charged with armed robbery. The Palo Alto Police had agreed to help with the experiment. As if they were real-life suspects, the prisoners were read their rights and had their mug shots and fingerprints taken. After being stripped, searched and de-roused, they were taken into the cells that would be their homes for the next two weeks. Zimbardo, acting as a prison warden, would be able to observe and make notes about what happened during the course of the study.
Willowbrook Hepatitis Experiments

Background

Willowbrook State School in Staten Island, N.Y., housed and cared for mentally disabled children. Dr. Saul Krugman from the New York University School of Medicine and his coworkers began conducting hepatitis studies there in 1955 and continued for more than 15 years. Hepatitis was a major problem at Willowbrook for patients and staff, and Krugman believed that most newly admitted children became infected with hepatitis within the first year of residence in the institution. (More recent estimates put the risk of a child contracting hepatitis at Willowbrook at 30 to 50 percent.)

Hepatitis A is a relatively mild disease affecting the liver. Symptoms include jaundice, fatigue, abdominal pain, loss of appetite, nausea, diarrhea, and fever. It is usually spread from person to person when someone puts something in his or her mouth that has been contaminated with the feces of an infected person.

It was known at the time that the response to infection was milder in the younger children and that once infected, children were protected against the more damaging forms of hepatitis. Krugman was interested in using gamma globulin antibodies (taken from the blood of hepatitis patients) as a way to create immunity in others.

Antibodies are produced by the body’s immune system in response to foreign substances. Krugman thought that if a child was infected with hepatitis after he or she had been injected with these protective antibodies, a mild case of hepatitis would result, and the child would have long-lasting protection against future, potentially more serious, infections. His goal was to find the best ways to protect children from hepatitis.

More than 700 children at Willowbrook were involved in the studies, which fell into two categories. The first used children who were already at Willowbrook. Researchers injected some with protective antibodies (the experimental group) and did not inject others (the control group). Then, they observed the children’s degree of immunity to hepatitis.

In another series of studies, researchers gave newly admitted children protective antibodies. A subset of these children were then deliberately infected with hepatitis virus (obtained from sick children). Those who had received protective antibodies but were not deliberately infected served as the controls. The children in this experiment were housed in a well-equipped and well-staffed facility where they could be given special care and be kept away from the other types of infections at the institution.

As the studies progressed, researchers noticed differing symptoms caused by different virus samples. They concluded that there are two strains of hepatitis, A and B. Hepatitis B is more difficult to pass on to others because it is spread through blood and sexual contact. Hepatitis B can lead to long-term (chronic) infection.

The children who were deliberately infected with hepatitis A virus had a mild reaction (a swollen liver, yellowing of the skin and eyes, and a few days of vomiting and not eating). The researchers noted that many children would become infected during their stay at Willowbrook, anyway. Children who naturally got hepatitis from other children had worse symptoms than those who got it from the study.

The researchers obtained consent from the parents of each child. Parents of children who participated early in the study gave consent after receiving information provided by Willowbrook orally and in writing. Parents of children who participated later could meet the research staff, tour the facility, discuss the program with the staff and other parents, and speak with their own private physicians. Then, after several weeks, researchers asked for the parents’ consent.
Letter to Parents

This is the letter parents received from researchers in the Willowbrook Study.

November 15, 1958
Willowbrook Study
Staten Island, New York

Dear Mrs. __________:

We are studying the possibility of preventing epidemics of hepatitis on a new principle. Virus is introduced and gamma globulin given later to some, so that either no attack or only a mild attack of hepatitis is expected to follow. This may give the children immunity against this disease for life. We should like to give your child this new form of prevention with the hope that it will afford protection.

Permission form is enclosed for your consideration. If you wish to have your children given the benefit of this new preventive, will you so signify by signing the form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Tuskegee Syphilis Study</th>
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<tr>
<td>Note: This description was taken verbatim from the following website on November 5, 2014: <a href="http://www.tuskegee.edu/about_us/centers_of_excellence/bioethics_center/about_the_usphs_syphilis_study.aspx">http://www.tuskegee.edu/about_us/centers_of_excellence/bioethics_center/about_the_usphs_syphilis_study.aspx</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Where the Study Took Place</td>
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<td>The study took place in Macon County, Alabama, the county seat of Tuskegee referred to as the &quot;Black Belt&quot; because of its rich soil and vast number of black sharecroppers who were the economic backbone of the region. The research itself took place on the campus of Tuskegee Institute.</td>
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<td>What it Was Designed to Find Out</td>
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<td>The intent of the study was to record the natural history of syphilis in Blacks. The study was called the &quot;Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male.&quot; When the study was initiated there were no proven treatments for the disease. Researchers told the men participating in the study that they were to be treated for &quot;bad blood.&quot; This term was used locally by people to describe a host of diagnosable ailments including but not limited to anemia, fatigue, and syphilis.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Who Were the Participants</td>
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<td>A total of 600 men were enrolled in the study. Of this group 399 who had syphilis were a part of the experimental group and 201 were control subjects. Most of the men were poor and illiterate sharecroppers from the county.</td>
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<tr>
<td>What the Men Received in Exchange for Participation</td>
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<td>The men were offered what most Negroes could only dream of in terms of medical care and survivors insurance. They were enticed and enrolled in the study with incentives including: medical exams, rides to and from the clinics, meals on examination days, free treatment for minor ailments and guarantees that provisions would be made after their deaths in terms of burial stipends paid to their survivors.</td>
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<td>Treatment Withheld</td>
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<td>There were no proven treatments for syphilis when the study began. When penicillin became the standard treatment for the disease in 1947 the medicine was withheld as a part of the treatment for both the experimental group and control group.</td>
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