

FC for Group-1 Officers:
Mgmt & Behaviour Studies, Session-04

The pleasure and perils of obedience to authority.

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Today's Readings

- a. Milgram Stanley. The Perils of Obedience. Harper's. 1973 Dec; 247(1483):62.
- b. Blass Thomas. The Milgram Paradigm After 35 Years: Some Things We Now Know About Obedience to Authority. Journal of Applied Social Psychology. 1999; 29(5):955-978.
- c. Compilation of government guidelines regarding oral instructions by superior officers. [Available in Readings Volume-2]

Importance of Obedience for Organizational Purpose.

- Recall Fayol's 14 Principles of Mgmt.
 - ▶ Discipline (3)
 - ▶ Hierarchy of authority (9)
 - ▶ Order (10)
- Obedience to legitimate authority is required for order & discipline.
- The tradition of closure in official letters with "Yours faithfully" implies loyalty.
- Leadership implies followerships.

Obedience versus Conscience.

Stanley Milgram's Experiments.

- **Background**
 - ▶ Jews were tortured and persecuted in Nazi Germany.
 - ▶ After 2nd WW, one Eichman was tried for sending many Jews to concentration camps.
 - ▶ Eichman's defense: He did his job. Executed orders of his superiors.
- **Stanley Milgram**
 - ▶ Himself a Jew
 - ▶ Social Psychologist
 - ▶ Faculty at Yale University
- **Milgram's Question:**
Is there any evidence to support Eichman's defense?



01AboutOglMilgramExp.wmv

Basic design of obedience Exp.

- Two people come to a psychol lab to participate in a study on memory & learning.
- One is designated as a teacher and the other as the learner.
- Psychologist explains that the study is concerned with effects of punishment on learning.
- In presence of the 'teacher', the learner is taken to a room and told to correctly identify the second word of a word pair. An electrode is strapped and the learner is told that (s)he will receive electric shock of increasing intensity, for wrong answers.
- Real focus in on the 'teacher'
- seated before an impressive instrument panel.
- 30 lever switches in a line, each labeled from 15 to 450 volts.
- Groups of four switches are also labeled in words from L-R
 - ▶ Slight, moderate, strong, very strong, intense, extreme intensity shock, danger: severe shock, XXX.
- When a switch is depressed, a pilot light glows, voltage energizer flashes, voltmeter dial swings to right & relay clicks sound off.
- Now lets watch another video showing a replication of the exp.



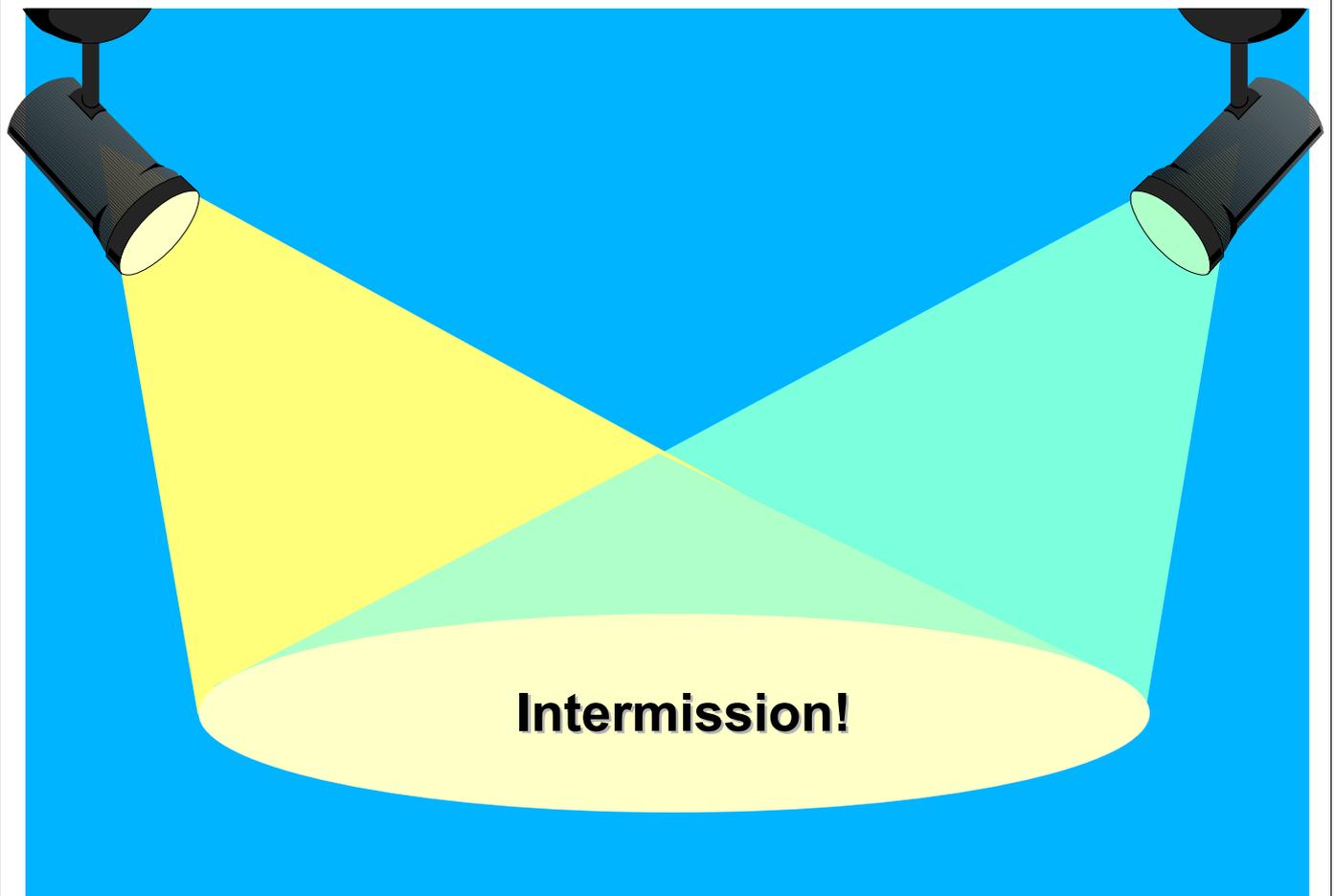
02MilgramExpReplication.wmv



Questions?

Comments.

Answers.



Three typical subjects in Milgram's experiments:

- Gretchen Brandt:
 - ▶ Goes upto 210 Volts, disobeys psychologist & Quits.
- Fred Prozi:
 - ▶ Goes upto 450 Volts, psychologist terminates the experiment.
- Moris Braverman:
 - ▶ Goes beyond 300 Volts, his tension gives into laughter.
- 65% subjects went upto 450 Volts!
- The ordinary person who shocked the victim did so out of a sense of obligation - an impression of his duties as a subject - and not from any peculiarly aggressive tendencies.
- Let us watch one more replication!



03MilgramExpReplication.wmv

Experimenter comments:

- They are proud of doing a good job, obeying the experimenter under difficult circumstances.
- One variation showed that 30% were willing to deliver 450V even when they had to forcibly push the learner's hand down on the electrode.
- Another variation: subject was given help of another person to administer the shock. 92.5% went upto 450V!
- Person feels responsible to the authority directing him but feels no responsibility for the content of the actions that the authority prescribes.
- Morality does not disappear- it acquires a radically different focus: depending on, how adequately he has performed the action called for by authority.

Results from replications of Milgram's experiment.

- Obedience rates have remained almost at the same level of more than 50%.
- No apparent change over time.
- No gender difference.
- The authority figure in the Milgram's experiment is a combination of expert, legitimate and referent authorities.

Factor's affecting obedience

- **Experimenter's physical presence has a marked impact on his authority.**
 - ▶ Obedience dropped off sharply, when orders were given by telephone. The experimenter could often induce disobedient subject to go on by returning to the laboratory.
- **Conflicting authority severely paralyses action.**
 - ▶ When two experimenters of equal status, both seated at the command desk, gave incompatible orders, no shocks were delivered past the point of their disagreement.
- **The rebellious action of others severely undermines authority.**
 - ▶ 3 teachers (2 actors + 1 subject) administered a test & shocks. When the 2 actors disobeyed the experimenter and refused to go beyond a certain shock level, 90% subjects joined their disobedient peers and refused as well.

Key Insight

Being enlightened about the unexpected power of authority may help a person to stay away from an authority-dominated situation, but once (s)he is already in such a situation, knowledge does not necessarily free the individual to defy the authority in charge.

Internal Emergency in India, 1975-77.

- 26 Jun 1975 - 21 Mar 1977, recommended by Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi & declared by President Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed.
- Political activists, opposition leaders, & protestors were arrested. Fundamental rights were suspended.
- Justice J C Shah, former Chief Justice of India was appointed by Gol, in 1977 to examine the excesses during the emergency days (1975-77).
- Shah Commission report was submitted to Parliament in August 1978
- The report found that most IAS officers accepted orders even though they thought these orders were improper and had political motives.

Post-emergency - Gol orders.

- **DP&AR OM# 11013/12/78-Ests.(A), dt 01-08-78: impressed upon all Govt. servants that:**
 - Oral instructions should not, as far as possible, be issued by senior officers to their subordinates;
 - if the oral instructions are issued, they should be confirmed in writing immediately thereafter;
 - if a junior officer seeks confirmation to the oral instructions given by the senior, the latter should confirm it in writing whenever such confirmation is sought.
 - a junior officer who has received oral orders from his superior officer should seek confirmation in writing as early as practicable;
 - whenever a member of the personal staff of a Minister communicates an oral order on behalf of the Minister, it should be confirmed by him in writing immediately thereafter;
 - if a junior officer receives oral instructions from the Minister or from his personal staff and the orders are in accordance with the norms, rules, regulations or procedures, they should be brought to the notice of the Secretary or the Head of the Department, as the case may be, for information.
 - if a junior officer receives oral instructions from the Minister or from his personal staff and the orders are not in accordance with the norms, rules, regulations or procedures, they should seek further clear orders from the Secretary or the Head of the Department, as the case may be, about the line of action to be taken, stating clearly that the oral instructions are not in accordance with the rules, regulations, norms or procedures.
- **Since the personal staff of Minister whether belonging to organized services or otherwise are governed by the provisions of the Conduct Rules, 1964, they are also required to observe the orders outlined in the preceding paragraph.**

APCS Conduct Rule 3(4):

No Government employee shall, in the performance of his official duties or in the exercise of powers conferred on him,

- act otherwise than in his best judgment
- except when he is acting under the direction of his official superior, and shall,
- where he is acting under such direction, obtain the direction in writing, wherever practicable, and
- where it is not practicable to obtain the direction in writing, shall obtain written confirmation of the direction as soon thereafter as possible.
- It shall be incumbent on such official superior to confirm in writing the oral directions given by him, and
- in any event, he shall not refuse such written confirmation where a request is made by the Government employee to whom such direction was given.

Explanation: Nothing in sub-rule (4) shall be construed as empowering a Govt. employee to evade his responsibilities by seeking instructions from, or approval of, an official superior where such instructions are not necessary under the scheme of distribution of powers and responsibilities.

More simply:

- Act according to your best judgment, unless you are acting under orders of your superior.
- If acting according to orders of higher authority, then obtain the direction in writing.
- Follow-up oral orders to your subordinates by a written confirmation.
- Do not be irritated if your subordinate asks for written confirmation of your oral orders. Instead, confirm your orders in writing.
- Use delegated powers according to your best judgment, and do not avoid your responsibility by seeking written orders of superior for cases disposable by use of delegated powers.

Questions?

& Comments

