

Conducting the milgram experiment in Poland, psychologists show people still obey

March 14 2017

A replication of one of the most widely known obedience studies, the Stanley Milgram experiment, shows that even today, people are still willing to harm others in pursuit of obeying authority. The study is published in *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

The title is direct, "Would you deliver an [electric shock](#) in 2015?" and the answer, according to the results of this replication study, is yes. Social psychologists from SWPS University of Social Sciences and Humanities in Poland replicated a modern version of the Milgram experiment and found results similar to studies conducted 50 years earlier.

The research appears in the journal *Social Psychological and Personality Science*.

"Our objective was to examine how high a level of obedience we would encounter among residents of Poland," write the authors. "It should be emphasized that tests in the Milgram paradigm have never been conducted in Central Europe. The unique history of the countries in the region made the issue of obedience towards authority seem exceptionally interesting to us."

For those unfamiliar with the Milgram experiment, it tested [people's](#) willingness to deliverer electric shocks to another person when encouraged by an experimenter. While no shocks were actually delivered in any of the experiments, the participants believed them to be real. The

Milgram experiments demonstrated that under certain conditions of pressure from authority, people are willing to carry out commands even when it may harm someone else.

"Upon learning about Milgram's experiments, a vast majority of people claim that 'I would never behave in such a manner,' says Tomasz Grzyb, a social psychologist involved in the research. "Our study has, yet again, illustrated the tremendous power of the situation the subjects are confronted with and how easily they can agree to things which they find unpleasant."

While ethical considerations prevented a full replication of the experiments, researchers created a similar set-up with lower "shock" levels to test the level of obedience of participants.

The researchers recruited 80 participants (40 men and 40 women), with an age range from 18 to 69, for the study. Participants had up to 10 buttons to press, each a higher "shock" level. The results show that the level of [participants'](#) obedience towards instructions is similarly high to that of the original Milgram studies.

They found that 90% of the people were willing to go to the highest level in the experiment. In terms of differences between peoples willingness to deliver shock to a man versus a woman, "It is worth remarking," write the authors, "that although the number of people refusing to carry out the commands of the experimenter was three times greater when the student [the person receiving the "shock"] was a woman, the small sample size does not allow us to draw strong conclusions."

In terms of how society has changed, Grzyb notes, "half a century after Milgram's original research into obedience to authority, a striking majority of subjects are still willing to electrocute a helpless individual."

More information: Doliski, Dariusz; Grzyb, Tomasz; Folwarczny, Micha; Grzyba?a, Patrycja; Krzyszycha, Karolina; Martynowska, Karolina; Trojanowski, Jakub. Would you deliver an electric shock in 2015 Obedience in the experimental paradigm developed by Stanley Milgram in the 50 years following the original studies. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, online before print March 14, 2017.

Provided by Society for Personality and Social Psychology

Citation: Conducting the milgram experiment in Poland, psychologists show people still obey (2017, March 14) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2017-03-milgram-poland-psychologists-people.html>

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