

Activity 2:3

analyzing data—the Milgram experiment

(n=number of subjects)		Experiment 1: (n=40)	Experiment 2: experimenter absent (n=40)	Experiment 3: Women (n=40)	Experiment 4: subject chooses shock level (n=40)	Experiment 5: two peers rebel (n=40)
Shock level	Verbal designation and voltage level					
1	Slight shock 15				3	
2	30				6	
3	45				7	
4	60				7	
5	Moderate shock 75				5	
6	90	1	1		4	
7	105		1		1	1
8	120				1	1
9	Strong shock 135		1		3	
10	150	6	7	4	1	3
11	165		3	1		4
12	180	1	1	2		1
13	Very strong shock 195		5			4
14	210			1		4
15	225		1			12
16	240					
17	Intense shock 255					
18	270	2	3	2		4
19	285					4
20	300	1	3	1		2
21	Extreme intensity shock 315	1		2		
22	330	1	1	1		3
23	345					1
24	360		2			
25	Danger: severe shock 375	1			1	
26	390					
27	405		1			1
28	420		1			
29	435					
30	450	26	9	26	1	4
Mean maximum shock level		24.55	18.15	24.73	5.50	16.45
Percentage obedient subjects		65.0%	20.5%	65.0%	2.5%	10.0%

Reading 2:2

Stanley Milgram gives the following account of the reaction of one of his experiment's subjects, Jan Rensaleer. (© S. Milgram, *Obedience to Authority*, 1974.)

The subject [Mr. Rensaleer] is a 32-year-old industrial engineer, sporting blond hair and a mustache. He is self-contained and speaks with a trace of a foreign accent. He is neatly dressed. In the interview he tells us that he emigrated from Holland after the Second World War and that he is a member of the Dutch Reformed Church. He is mild-mannered and intelligent.

When the victim complains at the 150-volt level, the subject turns to the experimenter and asks, "What do I do now?"

The experimenter tells him to continue.

The engineer presses his hand to his head and proceeds with the test. He glances more and more often at the experimenter. At 255 volts, he pushes the chair away from the shock generator and turns to the experimenter:

Mr. Rensaleer: Oh, I can't continue this way; it's a voluntary program, if the man doesn't want to go on with it.

Experimenter: Please continue.

(A long pause.)

Mr. Rensaleer: No, I can't continue. I'm sorry.

Experimenter: The experiment requires that you go on.

Mr. Rensaleer: The man, he seems to be getting hurt.

Experimenter: There is no permanent tissue damage.

Mr. Rensaleer: Yes, but I know what shocks do to you. I'm an electrical engineer, and I have had shocks . . . and you get real shook up by them — especially if you know the next one is coming. I'm sorry.

Experimenter: It is absolutely essential that you continue.

Mr. Rensaleer: Well, I won't — not with the man screaming to get out.

Experimenter: You have no other choice.

Mr. Rensaleer: I do have a choice. (Incredulous and indignant.) Why don't I have a choice? I came here on my own free will. I thought I could help in a research project. But if I have to hurt somebody to do that, or if I was in his place too, I wouldn't stay there. I can't continue. I'm very

sorry. I think I've gone too far already, probably.

When asked [later] who was responsible for shocking the learner against his will, he [Rensaleer] said, "I would put it on myself entirely."

He refused to assign any responsibility to the learner or the experimenter.

"I should have stopped the first time he complained. I did want to stop at that time. I turned around and looked at you. I guess it's a matter of . . . authority, if you want to call it that: my being impressed by the thing, and going on although I didn't want to. Say, if you're serving in the Army, and you have to do something you don't like to do, but your superior tells you to do it. That sort of thing, you know what I mean?"

"One of the things I think is very cowardly is to try to shove the responsibility onto somebody else. See, if I now turned around and said, 'It's your fault . . . it's not mine,' I would call that cowardly."

Although the subject defied the experimenter at 255 volts, he still feels responsible for administering any shocks beyond the victim's first protests. He is hard on himself and does not allow the structure of authority in which he is functioning to absolve him of any responsibility.

Mr. Rensaleer expressed surprise at the underestimation of obedience by the psychiatrists. He said that, on the basis of his experience in Nazi-occupied Europe, he would predict a high level of compliance to orders. He suggests, "It would be interesting to conduct the same tests in Germany and other countries."

The experiment made a deep impression on the subject, so much so that a few days after his participation he wrote a long, careful letter to the staff, asking if he could work with us.

"Although I am . . . employed in engineering, I have become convinced that the social sciences, and especially psychology, are much more important in today's world."