Authority

People comply with requests more when requester is in a position of authority
Obedience Study

• Psychological problems

• Men

• Unaware of harm

Stanley Milgram

Milgram’s participants obeyed because of the experimenter’s authority, and not because of abnormal psychological problems
Obedience Study: Replications

Experimenter told “teacher” to stop delivering the shock even though the “learner” clearly indicated that he wanted the study to go on.

100% of the time, the “teacher” stopped delivering shock.

Obedience Study: Replications

The experimenter (the authority figure) was hooked up to the shock generator, and the “learner” gave the directives to continue.

100% of the time the “teachers” stopped delivering shock when the experimenter said to
Obedience Study: Replications

Two experimenters gave contradictory orders. One ordered the “teacher” to continue giving the shock, the other ordered the “teacher” to stop.

“Teachers” asked for consensus, but 100% of the time ultimately stopped delivering shock.

Why Do People Obey Authority?

1. Socialization practices

From a very young age, we are taught that obedience to authority is the correct way to behave.
Why Do People Obey Authority?

1. Socialization practices
2. Heuristic

Authority is a heuristic for knowledge and wisdom

Symbols of Authority

1. Title

High status title increases compliance and obedience
Doctor's Orders
Hofling et al. (1966)

Researcher called nurses’ stations

Identified self as physician

Directed nurse to give drug to patient

“This is Dr. Smith, from Psychiatry, calling. I was asked to see Mr. Jones this morning, and I'm going to have to see him again tonight. I don't have a lot of time, and I'd like him to have some medication by the time I get to the ward. Will you please check your medicine cabinet and see if you have some Astroten? That's A-S-T-R-O-T-E-N.
The medicine cabinet contains a pillbox:

ASTROTEN
5 mg. capsules
Usual dose: 5 mg
Maximum daily dose: 10 mg

The researcher continues, “You have it? Fine. Please give Mr. Jones 20 milligrams of Astroten, that’s 4 capsules. I’ll be up in 10 minutes, and I’ll sign the order then, but I’d like the drug to have started taking effect.

Doctor’s Orders

There were 4 reasons why the nurse should have refused the order:

• Prescription given over the phone, which was in violation of hospital policy
• Medication was unauthorized
• Dosage was obviously and dangerously excessive
• Physician was unknown to the nurse
95% of the nurses obeyed!!

Symbols of Authority

1. Title
2. Clothes

People comply more when requester’s clothes denote authority
Symbols of Authority:
Clothes
Bickman (1974)

“You see that guy over there by the meter? He’s over parked but doesn’t have any change. Give him a dime.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Uniform</th>
<th>Uniform</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>42%</td>
<td>92%</td>
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Symbols of Authority

1. Title
2. Clothes
3. Trappings

People comply more when requester’s things denote wealth or status

Horn Honking Study
Doob & Gross (1968)

Luxury Car

Economy Car