Review
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Published by: American Sociological Association
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/2072605
Accessed: 16-01-2016 23:42 UTC

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Byrne, and C. Alleyne’s “Knowledge and use of Birth Control in Barbados,” *Demography* Vol. 4, No. 2, 1967). Despite the points noted above, this study brings out many important relationships between fertility and social and economic elements.

**Social Control, Deviance, and the Law**

**Obedience and the Attribution of Liability**


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Crimes of obedience are illegal or immoral acts performed in response to orders or directives from authority. According to Kelman and Hamilton, such crimes “have become larger in their scale and more horrific in their content as the reach of authority in coordinating human action has been extended by the development of modern bureaucracies and nation states” (p. 307). Though Nazi Germany provides the most familiar examples, the book begins with a close description and discussion of several more recent instances: the My Lai massacre and subsequent court martial of Lt. William Calley, the abuses of office occurring in connection with the Watergate break-in and its cover-up, the Iran-Contra hearings, the Waldheim controversy, and several others. Subsequent chapters develop an elaborate theoretical framework in order to pursue two primary interrelated questions: Why do subordinates often obey, but sometimes disobey, illegitimate directives received from superiors? And how do both participants and observers make determinations of liability for the harm caused by crimes of obedience?

In the course of developing answers to such questions, Kelman and Hamilton make a strong contribution to an integrated and interdisciplinary social psychology. Adherents of all the major academic subdivisions of social psychology will find familiar techniques and concepts being used to build relevant arguments in different chapters. From the sociological tradition come discussions and data on how different forms of attachment to society shape obedience, and on the social structure, culture, and legal history of authority hierarchies. From the psychological tradition come discussions and data concerning personality traits and interpersonal schemas that affect obedience, and on attributions of responsibility by both actors and observers. From the interactionist tradition come discussions and data on how the microstructure of authority settings leads those involved to construe, define, or justify events in particular ways conducive to obedience or resistance. Despite this range of diverse traditions, the book remains fully coherent and tightly unified. The constructs drawn from these traditions are skillfully interwoven into a sensible and surprisingly seamless web of explanation. The writing is careful and clear almost throughout, evincing a strong desire to communicate with the reader. The authors convey difficult, subtle, or ambiguous concepts not through terse black-white definitions, but, instead, in such a way as to communicate nuances of meaning and usage. Often such discussions extend into footnotes for those desiring even further elaboration.

The book pursues in much broader perspective some of the issues initially raised by Stanley Milgram in the mid-1960s through his provocative research on obedience to authority. Despite Milgram’s undeniable genius in inventing a strikingly revealing experimental paradigm and in devising a wide range of intriguing variations of it, he was never fully up to the more integrative task of theory construction. Though he was sensitive to a number of isolated psychological and interpersonal processes, the overall structure of obedience and disobedience to authority eluded him. In his 1974 book, for example, he ends up accounting for obedience with an underspecified and weakly integrated collection of quite disparate factors: role expectations, past socialization, and a concern with self-presentation somehow combine to trigger in the subordinate actor an evolved biological capacity—a capacity to shift sharply from a self-directed (or autonomous) mindset to an obedient (or agentic) state. But leaving aside Milgram’s personal efforts at explanation, one may note that, more strikingly, two
decades after he published his seminal findings no one had yet developed a conceptual framework that could, for example, account systematically for the enormous variation in obedience observed across dozens of different experiments conducted by Milgram and others. Kelman and Hamilton, however, develop precisely this sort of framework and use it quite effectively to explain the different obedience rates observed in Milgram's diverse experimental conditions. Their broad-gauged approach usefully integrates structural, interpersonal, and personality factors to provide a general model for analyzing obedience and disobedience to authority.

Following their introductory discussion of recent cases in the first two chapters, and after a historical-conceptual discussion of the "duty to obey" and the "duty to disobey" in a third chapter, Kelman and Hamilton develop the core of their general model in the next two chapters. This portion of the model centers on authority hierarchies and on the duties and pressures that they typically generate. The authors usefully explicate it, in part, by comparing it to and extending it from Kelman's well-known "three processes of social influence." The next chapter expands the core model to incorporate a nexus of countervailing forces. These forces arise external to the authority hierarchy from an anticipation of the negative consequences of having to obey. They are seen as typically being amplified and organized by collective processes. The authors then apply the extended model to Milgram's data. They use it again in the next chapter to interpret the responses obtained in a public opinion poll that asked people for their reactions to Lt. Calley's behavior at My Lai, including their own personal readiness to respond as he had. (The poll data come from a block quota sample of the U.S. population interviewed shortly after Calley's conviction.) Remaining chapters discuss and test the effects of a number of social and psychological variables that are hypothesized to shape or mediate the impact of the two primary factors in the model: i.e., (1) the felt pressure from an authority hierarchy to inflict harm on a victim, and (2) the felt counterpressure arising from a knowledge that the victim has been unjustly targeted.

Of particular interest are lengthy discussions, in a pair of chapters, of two contrasting groups of persons, both of whom appear in substantial numbers in the samples interviewed about Lt. Calley. One group appears to be primarily sensitive to the type of "role-oriented" responsibility associated with the above-mentioned factor 1. These persons tend to feel that anyone who merely carries out an illegal order from a legitimate authority should not be held personally liable for the harm inflicted on the victim, however unjust the inflicting of such harm may be. Responsibility for this injustice rests solely with the superiors who issued the order. In contrast, the other group seems to be primarily responsive to the type of "deed-oriented" responsibility associated with factor 2. Such persons tend to believe that anyone who voluntarily obeys an illegal order—even one issued by a perfectly legitimate authority—should be held personally liable for the immoral harm inflicted on the victim. Responsibility for the injustice does not rest only with those who issued the order.

As Kelman and Hamilton show, these two ways of perceiving liability have their conceptual basis in two different legal-philosophical frameworks for attributing responsibility. At different times in history, each has officially been the more accepted way of calculating liability, certainly within the realm of military chains of command. At the individual level, the two ways of viewing liability are associated with distinctive sets of demographic and dispositional variables. In this connection it is interesting to note that, given the demographic composition of the jury that deliberated the fate of Oliver North, we should have expected precisely the outcome observed: North was found innocent of all charges involving actions that could be seen as having been ordered by his superiors; he was found guilty only of actions that he clearly undertook on his own initiative.


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In the last twelve years over a thousand