Obedience

Scenario

• You’re assistant manager at a restaurant
  – Police officer calls
  – Describes a theft there, and the perpetrator
  – The description matches an employee
  – Officer asks you to confiscate the employee’s clothing and do a strip search
• What do you do?

Obedience

• A teacher “taught words” to a learner
  – Study pair: blue → girl
  – Test: blue → ? (boy, girl, grass, hat)
• If the learner made an error:
  – The teacher had to administer an electric shock
  – Had to increase the shock for every error

Obedience

• The teacher was a participant
• The learner was a confederate
  – Looks like a participant, to the actual participant
  – Script included screams, complaints about his heart, then silence as voltage climbed

Effects of psychological distance

Predicted rates of obedience

• Milgram asked 40 psychiatrists to predict obedience at different voltages
• Average predicted obedience:
  – that 4% would obey up to 300 V
  – that 0.1% would obey up to 450 V (the max)
  – Actual: About 60% obeyed up to 450 V