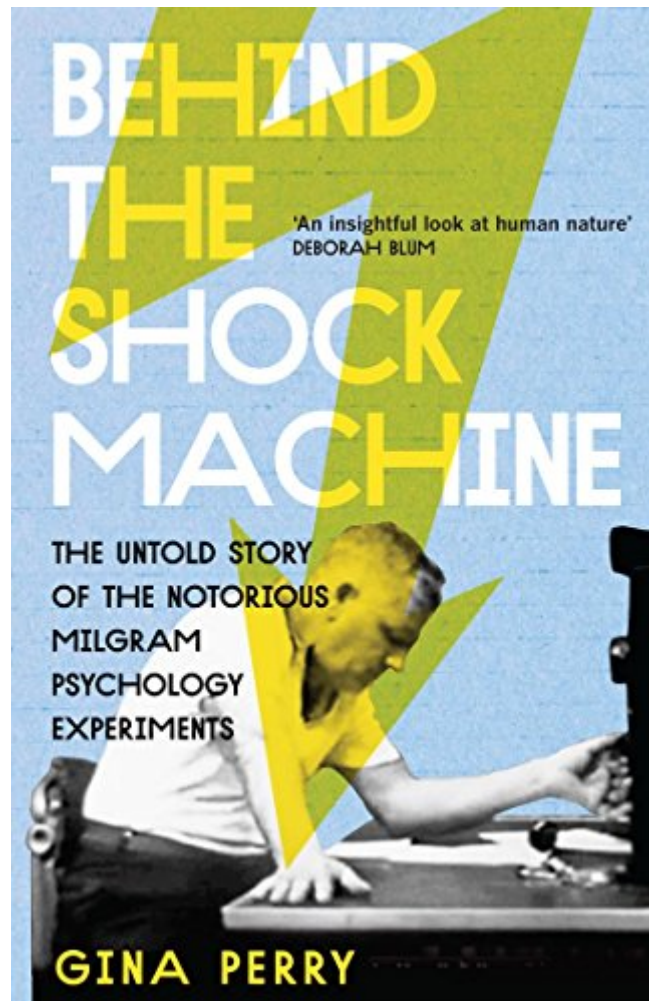


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Behind The Shock Machine: The Untold Story Of The Notorious Milgram Psychology Experiments



Synopsis

The true story of the most controversial psychological research of the modern era. In the summer of 1961, a group of men and women volunteered for a memory experiment to be conducted by young, dynamic psychologist Stanley Milgram. None could have imagined that, once seated in the lab, they would be placed in front of a box known as a shock machine and asked to administer a series of electric shocks to a man they'd just met. And no one could have foreseen how the repercussions of their actions, made under pressure and duress, would reverberate throughout their lives. For what the volunteers did not know was that the man was an actor, the shocks were fake, and what was really being tested was just how far they would go. When Milgram's results were released, they created a worldwide sensation. He reported that people had repeatedly shocked a man they believed to be in pain, even dying, because they had been told to do so. He linked the finding to Nazi behaviour during the Holocaust. But some questioned Milgram's unethical methods in fooling people. Milgram became both hero and villain, and his work seized the public imagination for more than half a century, inspiring books, plays, films, and art. For Gina Perry, the story of the experiments never felt finished. Listening to participants' accounts and reading Milgram's unpublished files and notebooks, she pieced together an intriguing, sensational story: Milgram's plans went further than anyone had imagined. This is the compelling tale of one man's ambition and of the experiment that defined a generation.

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Customer Reviews

I write this review with some trepidation, not only because [full disclosure here] I was one of Milgram's graduate students and I liked him very much, but also because I have corresponded with and met Gina Perry. She is a pleasant, likable person and I think she is sincere but wrong. The disclosures about Milgram are disturbing but at the same time, it's my opinion that Perry's book is also unintentionally dishonest in a number of ways. You might imagine that being a student of Milgram's, I'd be very upset by this book, which reveals that many things he said about the shock experiments were less than totally honest. But in fact I think it allows me to see things in a more balanced way than Perry does. She went into the book with an awe of the experiments and knew very little negative about Milgram. But the book reads as if she felt betrayed (I freely admit this is speculation on my part) and went to the opposite extreme as a reaction; she savagely flays Milgram in her book over and over again. I knew too much about Milgram to feel betrayed. I always knew Milgram had flaws. He was so brusque and intimidating in the first class I took with him that I almost didn't take another one. But I eventually grew to like him and found that he was very gracious and kind to people he liked. Fortunately this included me. Perry went through the archives at Yale University and does document much of what she writes. We were all led to believe, for example, that everyone was thoroughly debriefed immediately after they finished their part in the experiment they were part of (there were many variations published). This is the real bombshell of the book.

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