

# The Red Guard and the Cultural Revolution, How Could It Have Happened?

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# Milgram's Blind Obedience Study

- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORU4II5b7zk>
- Participants were “randomly” assigned to be either a teacher or learner
- Participants were told the study was on how shock therapy influences learning
- However, it was actually testing how much the “teachers” would harm the learners



## Zimbardo's Lesson's From Milgram's Studies: Creating Evil Traps for Good People

- Offer an ideology
- Alter the semantics of the act, actor and the action
- Create rules that are vague and change them as necessary
- Give participants a meaningful role to play
- Diffuse responsibility




# What Was China Like Before the Cultural Revolution?

- “China’s 600 million people have two remarkable peculiarities; they are, first of all poor, and secondly, blank. That may seem like a bad thing, but it is really a good thing. Poor people want change, want to do things, want revolution. A clean sheet of paper has no blotches, and so the newest and most beautiful pictures can be painted on it” – Mao Zedong 1958, (Macfarquhar, 2006, p.1).



# Offer an Ideology

- Mao promoted an ideological orthodoxy for economic prosperity
- Mao predicted that China would develop rapidly and soon match the economic performance of the industrial world
- The Little Red Book was used to promote Mao's ideology
- People's daily lives were inundated with the images, sounds, and ideas of Mao
- All daily school activities reflected Chinese communist ideology



# Altering the Semantics of the Act, the Actor and the Action

- The “powerful guard of the red regime”
- The “honorable guard of the red country”
- “Long live the proletarian revolutionary spirit of rebellion!”
- “We intend to strike down... reactionaries throughout the entire world
- “The Great Proletarian Revolution”
  - (Macfarquhar & Schoenhals, 2006)



# Create Rules that are Vague and Change them as Necessary

- Mao formed an alliance of civil and military leaders
- 1962, he launched the Socialist Education Campaign
- Communist Party's central committee issued a Sixteen Point Directive - August 1966




# Give Participants A Meaningful Role to Play

- On 16 May 1966, Mao called on the masses, but focused on students to reject capitalism and return to Mao's Chinese socialist vision
- Students were encouraged to attack teachers, factory administrators, and parents




# Diffusion of Responsibility

- Mao endorsed the students saying that they had a “right to rebel”
- Mao called his red guard to “bombard the headquarters”



# The Possible Draw for Women

- Before the Liberation movement women were not allowed to cut their hair short, now the red guards refused to let them wear it long. Girls braids were deemed feudal and were cut by force.



# The Result: September- August of 1966

- By the last Red Guard rally Mao had 12 million red guards all over China
- Searching, confiscating and destroying property belonging to families with “bad class” background
- 33,695 homes of families in Beijing were looted by the Red Guards, or people claiming to be Red Guards
- 84,222 homes of “bourgeois” families looted



# The Result

- In Beijing the Red Guards confiscated 5.7 tons of gold, 345,200 liang of silver, 55,549,900 vuan in cash and 613,600 antique or jade pieces
- By the end of the cultural revolution 4,922 of the 6,843 official places of historical or cultural interest had been destroyed
- Altogether Mao Zedong's government policies resulted in 30million deaths.




# The Result

- Classrooms were turned into prisons
- In Daxing people were killed mercilessly, at times even being buried alive
- In Daxinzhuang People's Commune in August of 1966 the commune head and secretary issued a call for the immediate wholesale extermination of "landlord and rich peasant elements" the death toll reached 325



# The Result

- “Freed from parental and societal constraints, youths, both girls and boys, had been unleashed to perpetrate assault, battery, and murder upon their fellow citizens to the extent their barely formed consciences permitted” (Macfarquhar & Schoenhals, 2006, p.131).



# How can we prevent this from happening again?

- Zimbardo (2006) suggests that we “[Can] avoid crimes of obedience [by] assert[ing] one’s personal authority and always tak[ing] full responsibility for one’s actions” (p. 275).



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