

- 1) After the holocaust, Milgram began to study the extent to which people will comply with the orders of authority. He wanted to know if those in his study would continue to do things they felt were wrong, merely because an authority told them to do so.

Note: In order to study this, Milgram told the subjects that he was studying memory and learning. He had someone on his staff pretend to be another subject of the experiment, and on the day of testing, pretended to put the two into two different positions by chance. More clearly, he would call the actual subject the “teacher” and his assistant the “learner” and inform the “teacher” that this assignment was random. The “teacher” was then told to ask the “learner” questions and apply increasing electric shock upon incorrect answers. Despite the fact that the “learner”, who was never actually receiving shocks, yelled to stop and that he had a heart condition, the “teacher” was told to continue. Seventy percent of participants in Milgram’s study continued to administer shocks to the top level, even after the “learner” had quit responding. After the experiment, subjects were debriefed and allowed to meet and shake hands with their “learner” in order for them to understand that they inflicted no real physical damage.

- 2) The main benefit of this design is that Milgram could easily conclude that people were willing to do things outside of their moral comfort zone if told to do so by an authority. Had they known that they were not actually inflicting harm on someone else, their moral and ethical values would not have really been tested. The drawbacks include the many ethical problems of this design. Though in the long run, Milgram’s study may have benefited his subjects, psychological harm was imposed. This falls under the guideline of nonmaleficence. Another current guideline that Milgram would have been outside of, had today’s code of ethics been in place in his time, is fidelity. Psychologists are expected to establish relationships of trust with those they work with, and Milgram clearly does not do this when he reveals complete dishonesty in the end of his experiment. Perhaps the biggest problem with his experimental design is its integrity. While the study produces very real and important results, its means of getting to these results is done so through intentional misrepresentation of fact on many different levels. The subject thought that they were there for a study on learning, that they were randomly assigned their position, that the “learner” had a heart condition, and that they were actually administering electric shocks.
- 3) My design would be an electronic test. Subjects would be informed that they were participating in a study of compliance and support of authority. They would then be given a situation such as the one in Milgram’s study, but rather than it actually happening, they will just be told about it. Step by step they will be told

to type what they would be doing at each step. When a subject typed that they would do something besides what they were supposed to, an experimenter would step in, as Milgram did, and say, "please continue."

- 4) My design is more ethically acceptable because it eliminates most problems of nonmaleficence, fidelity, and integrity. Though in the long run, my study may not benefit the subjects as much, no psychological harm was imposed, thus correcting the nonmaleficence problem. Fidelity, another of Milgram's problems is also corrected. There is no dishonesty in my design, and the relationship of trust between psychologist and subjects will remain intact. Perhaps the biggest correction of the experimental design is integrity. There is no intentional misrepresentation of fact. The subjects are told that they are there for a study on compliance and support of authority, understand their assigned position, and are not under the impression that they are actually harming another person.
- 5) My design is more ethically acceptable, but does not adequately address #1 above. Though the same issues are tested, it is the ignorance of Milgram's subjects that makes it easy for Milgram to conclude that people were willing to do things outside of their moral comfort zone if told to do so by an authority. As in my experiment, those who know that they are not actually inflicting harm on someone else are not really testing their values. Writing something and doing it are two very different things. Though my design still studies the extent to which people will comply with the orders of authority, it does not do so to the extent Milgram's does, because it relies on what people "think" they will do. What people will actually do is the concept that shook Milgram's experiment, and its absence in mine will greatly affect the results and the analysis of them.