Aim:

Milgram (1963) was interested in researching how far people would go in obeying an instruction if it involved harming another person.

Stanley Milgram was interested in how easily ordinary people could be influenced into committing atrocities for example, Germans in WWII.

**Procedure:**

Volunteers were recruited for a lab experiment investigating “learning” (re: ethics: deception).  Participants were 40 males, aged between 20 and 50, whose jobs ranged from unskilled to professional, from the New Haven area. They were paid $4.50 for just turning up.

At the beginning of the experiment they were introduced to another participant, who was actually a confederate of the experimenter (Milgram).

They drew straws to determine their roles – learner or teacher – although this was fixed and the confederate was always the learner. There was also an “experimenter” dressed in a grey lab coat, played by an actor (not Milgram).

Two rooms in the Yale Interaction Laboratory were used - one for the learner (with an electric chair) and another for the teacher and experimenter with an electric shock generator.

The “learner” (Mr. Wallace) was strapped to a chair with electrodes. After he has learned a list of word pairs given him to learn, the "teacher" tests him by naming a word and asking the learner to recall its partner/pair from a list of four possible choices.

The teacher is told to administer an electric shock every time the learner makes a mistake, increasing the level of shock each time. There were 30 switches on the shock generator marked from 15 volts (slight shock) to 450 (danger – severe shock).



The learner gave mainly wrong answers (on purpose) and for each of these the teacher gave him an electric shock.

When the teacher refused to administer a shock the experimenter was to give a series of orders / prods to ensure they continued.

There were 4 prods and if one was not obeyed then the experimenter (Mr. Williams) read out the next prod, and so on.

**Prod 1:** Please continue.

**Prod 2:** The experiment requires you to continue.

**Prod 3:** It is absolutely essential that you continue.

**Prod 4:** You have no other choice but to continue.

### ****Results****:

65% (two-thirds) of participants (i.e. teachers) continued to the highest level of 450 volts. All the participants continued to 300 volts.

Milgram did more than one experiment – he carried out 18 variations of his study.  All he did was alter the situation (IV) to see how this affected obedience (DV).