Milgram recruited subjects for his experiments from various walks in life. Respondents were told the experiment would study the effects of punishment on learning ability. They were offered a token cash award for participating. Although respondents thought they had an equal chance of playing the role of a student or of a teacher, the process was rigged so all respondents ended up playing the teacher. The learner was an actor working as a cohort of the experimenter.

"Teachers" were asked to administer increasingly severe electric shocks to the "learner" when questions were answered incorrectly. In reality, the only electric shocks delivered in the experiment were single 45-volt shock samples given to each teacher. This was done to give teachers a feeling for the jolts they thought they would be discharging.

Shock levels were labeled from 15 to 450 volts. Besides the numerical scale, verbal anchors added to the frightful appearance of the instrument. Beginning from the lower end, jolt levels were labeled: "slight shock," "moderate shock," "strong shock," "very strong shock," "intense shock," and "extreme intensity shock." The next two anchors were "Danger: Severe Shock," and, past that, a simple but ghastly "XXX."

In response to the supposed jolts, the "learner" (actor) would begin to grunt at 75 volts; complain at 120 volts; ask to be released at 150 volts; plead with increasing vigor, next; and let out agonized screams at 285 volts. Eventually, in desperation, the learner was to yell loudly and complain of heart pain.

At some point the actor would refuse to answer any more questions. Finally, at 330 volts the actor would be totally silent-that is, if any of the teacher participants got so far without rebelling first.

Teachers were instructed to treat silence as an incorrect answer and apply the next shock level to the student.

If at any point the innocent teacher hesitated to inflict the shocks, the experimenter would pressure him to proceed. Such demands would take the form of increasingly severe statements, such as "The experiment *requires* that you continue."

What do you think was the average voltage given by teachers before they refused to administer further shocks? What percentage of teachers, if any, do you think went up to the maximum voltage of 450?

*Results from the experiment*. Some teachers refused to continue with the shocks early on, despite urging from the experimenter. This is the type of response Milgram expected as the norm. But Milgram was shocked to find those who questioned authority were in the minority. Sixty-five percent (65%) of the teachers were willing to progress to the maximum voltage level.

Participants demonstrated a range of negative emotions about continuing. Some pleaded with the learner, asking the actor to answer questions carefully. Others started to laugh nervously and act strangely in diverse ways. Some subjects appeared cold, hopeless, somber, or arrogant. Some thought they had killed the learner. Nevertheless, participants continued to obey, discharging the full shock to learners. One man who wanted to abandon the experiment was told the experiment must continue. Instead of challenging the decision of the experimenter, he proceeded, repeating to himself, "It’s got to go on, it’s got to go on."