# Obedience Under Scrutiny

Read a landmark experiment alongside a contemporary challenge

**P.1.11** "Locate and analyze primary sources of landmark experiments in psychology and other counter arguments."

NAME _____ DATE _____

## 1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

**YOUR JOB** Underline the details that identify each published source. Number one finding from the experiment and one objection to it, then circle a detail that limits what the finding can prove.

### What Did the Obedience Study Show?

1. In 1963, psychologist Stanley Milgram published *Behavioral Study of Obedience* in the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. That article is a primary source because Milgram reported a study he conducted, rather than summarizing someone else's account. He recruited 40 men from the New Haven area through newspaper advertisements and direct mail. Each man was assigned the role of teacher and told to deliver increasingly powerful electric shocks when a learner made errors. The learner was an actor, and the shocks were not real, but the teachers did not know that. The experimenter directed them to continue.

2. Milgram's article reports that 26 of the 40 teachers continued to the machine's highest setting, labeled 450 volts. Some participants showed intense tension during the session, including sweating and trembling. These details let a reader examine both the reported result and what happened while it was produced. Yet the number does not show that everyone would obey any authority in every situation. The participants were men recruited in one area, and they faced instructions in a particular laboratory setting. A researcher studying a different population or setting would need new evidence before making a broader claim.

3. In 1964, psychologist Diana Baumrind published *Some Thoughts on Ethics of Research: After Reading Milgram's "Behavioral Study of Obedience"* in *American Psychologist*. Her article is a primary source for a contemporary critic's response, not a firsthand report of Milgram's trials. Baumrind argued that the study's findings did not justify the distress imposed on participants. She also questioned whether a laboratory experiment could explain obedience to harmful orders outside the lab. Her critique challenges how readers judge the study's costs and reach. It does not change the count Milgram reported. Both articles can be located by author, title, journal, and year.

## 2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. Which publication would you locate to read Milgram's firsthand report? Give its author, title, journal, and year. Why is it a primary source?

2. Which detail from Milgram's report shows the outcome, and which detail shows participants' immediate reactions?

3. Which publication would you locate for Baumrind's counterargument? Give its author, title, journal, and year, then state one objection.

4. A reader says the 26-of-40 result proves everyone obeys authority. What feature of the original study limits that claim, and why?

## 3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

A student claims, "The experiment proves participants were permanently harmed." Write a short research note that uses a detail from Milgram's report, considers Baumrind's response, and names an original record you would seek to test the claim. Explain one limit of that record.

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## PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the details that identify each published source. Number one finding from the experiment and one objection to it, then circle a detail that limits what the finding can prove. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

## PART 2 · ANSWERS

| # | QUESTION | ANSWER |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Which publication would you locate to read Milgram's firsthand report? Give its author, title, journal, and year. Why is it a primary source? | **Stanley Milgram, *Behavioral Study of Obedience*, *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, 1963. It reports a study Milgram conducted.** |
| 2 | Which detail from Milgram's report shows the outcome, and which detail shows participants' immediate reactions? | **Twenty-six of 40 teachers reached the 450-volt setting. Some participants showed tension, including sweating and trembling.** |
| 3 | Which publication would you locate for Baumrind's counterargument? Give its author, title, journal, and year, then state one objection. | **Diana Baumrind, *Some Thoughts on Ethics of Research: After Reading Milgram's "Behavioral Study of Obedience"*, *American Psychologist*, 1964. Accept her objection about participant distress or applying laboratory findings outside the lab.** |
| 4 | A reader says the 26-of-40 result proves everyone obeys authority. What feature of the original study limits that claim, and why? | **The participants were men recruited in one area and tested in a particular laboratory setting. The result alone cannot establish how everyone would act in other settings.** |

## PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Milgram's 1963 report describes teachers sweating and trembling, evidence of distress during the session but not proof of lasting harm. Baumrind's 1964 response argues that exposing participants to distress raises an ethical concern. I would seek the participants' original follow-up questionnaires to check whether they reported problems later. Those self-reports might miss harms that participants did not recognize or chose not to disclose.

For the research note, accept another relevant original record, such as a participant interview, if the student explains how it could test lasting harm and identifies a plausible limitation. Distinguish distress during the experiment from evidence of permanent harm.