**Evaluation of Procedure**

**Weaknesses**

The most important criticism of Milgram’s work is concerned with its **ethics**:

Participants were **deceived** as to the exact nature of the study for which they had volunteered, and by making them believe they were administering real electric shocks to a real participant. However Milgram could not have found results that truly reflected the way people behave in real situations if he had not deceived his participants, all of whom were thoroughly debriefed afterwards

It can also be arguedthat Milgram did not take adequate measures to **protect** his participants from the stressand emotional conflict they experienced. Milgram’s defence was that he, and the students and psychiatrists - who had been asked to predict the results of the first experiment - did not expect the results he obtained, and went on to ask whether such criticisms are based as much on the unexpected results as on the procedure itself

It is possible that being involved in the experiment may have had a long-term effect on the participants. Before the experiment they might have considered themselves incapable of inflicting harm on another person unless the circumstances were extreme. Afterwards, this view of themselves was shattered. Milgram argued that such self-knowledge was valuable. A year after the experiments an independent psychiatrist interviewed 40 of the participants (many of whom had experienced extreme stress), and found no evidence of psychological harm or evidence of traumatic reactions.

In terms of the **right to withdraw**, it was good that Milgram stated at the start that the money paid to the participants was theirs regardless of whether they continued with the experiment. However, during the experiment the prods used suggested that withdrawal was not possible. This is ethically incorrect. Even so, we should consider whether the experiment would have been valid if the experimenter kept reminding the participant about his right to withdraw.

A major criticism of Milgram’s study was his **unrepresentative sample**. Milgram chose to study only American men (thus he was deliberately **ethnocentric**), but from a variety of backgrounds and different ages. It could be argued that by using men this produced a sample that was **biased**, or did not reflect the general population. The study was also limited to those people who read the advertisement and were prepared to participate in a laboratory experiment. These men who replied may have been somehow different from the general population.

Because of such an unrepresentative sample the results cannot be **generalised** to all people. Despite this, Milgram concluded that ‘obedience to authority is not a feature of German culture but a seemingly universal feature of human behaviour’. A number of **cross-cultural replications** of Milgram’s experiment have been done (e.g. Italy and Australia) gaining similar results

Another main criticism of Milgram’s experiment was that it was not ecologically valid. It can be argued thatMilgram’s work was carried out in an artificial setting and has little relevance to the real world. However, less artificial studies have been carried out gaining similar results. For example in Hoffling’s study (1966), nurses were asked to give potentially lethal injections to patients, and 21 out of 22 appeared prepared to do it. A further study was carried out by Sheridan and King (1972), where people were asked to give real electric shocks to a puppy. The participants obeyed even though they could see the distress of the animal.

**Strength**

A main strength of Milgram’s experiment was the amount of **control** he was able to administer. For example, participants believed they were being randomly assigned to either the teacher or learner, they believed they were actually administering electric shocks, they all used the same apparatus, had the same prods from the same person and so on.