



KEY ISSUES

You have to study at least one key issue for each approach to psychology

BLIND OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY IN A PRISON SETTING

One key implication to the power of obedience in real life is that in a prison setting. This may be a prison guard following orders, or a soldier acting as a guard. The example studied here is the torture of Iraqi detainees by US soldiers at Abu Ghraib prison in April 2004

There have been many occasions where guards and soldiers have acted their roles to an extent beyond what many people would consider imaginable. When someone breaks what most consider to be the **moral code**, questions are asked to find out how it could have happened. This sort of obedience is called **blind obedience**, because it ignores the person's own code of conduct and appears "blind" to moral rules

Abu Ghraib prison was built in Iraq by the British and used as a torture prison by Saddam Hussein, but he released all detainees by 2002 when he was under pressure from the US. In 2004, US Army personnel photographed their soldiers torturing Iraqi detainees so brutally it was generally considered to be beyond normal practice. A lot of people think the soldiers involved should be punished because they were not just following orders, they were committing crimes

Application of concepts and ideas:

- Zimbardo's prison study where the experiment was halted earlier than it should have to avoid serious damage
- Milgram's "normal" participants going to the extreme (and lethal) 450 volt shock
- Milgram suggested agency theory as an explanation

CONFLICT OBEDIENCE RESULTING IN HARM OF OTHERS

There have been incidents where soldiers have been obeying orders which results in the harm of ordinary civilians, which their training would not have left them to do. An example occurred at My Lai during the Vietnam War. On March 16 1968, US Army forces murdered over 350 unarmed Vietnamese civilians, mostly women and children

Some of the victims were tortured before being killed, and many of the bodies were mutilated even after death. As with Eichmann of the Nazis, the culprits explained they were just following orders. Milgram asked when conducting his studies, "Why would anyone in the situation have obeyed?"

Application of concepts and ideas:

- Agency theory states that people carry out orders because they are agents of their society
- When people are under orders to do something they would not do as an individual, they are likely to obey
- Milgram's 1963 study involved ordinary people "shocking" their victims, even whilst under moral strain

FOOTBALL VIOLENCE

Football fans can be very loyal to their teams, often to the point where their rivalry will escalate into violence. Two different teams playing in a game wear different colours, and their supporters wear matching colours: therefore, the two groups of fans are easily identifiable

There are often cases of football hooliganism abroad when English supporters travel to support their team. Examples include in Charleroi in 2000 and Stuttgart in 2006

Application of concepts and ideas:

- Two easily-identifiable groups means there will be a stronger in-group, making stronger out-group prejudice
- Social identity theory explains the in-group see the out-group as inferior
- Tajfel et al. discovered that even minimal groups discriminate against "inferior" out-groups

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RACE RIOTS

Race riots are civil disorder with race as the key factor, so usually it means rioting between two or more races. There can be destruction of property and a crowd that becomes a mob over which there is no control. The destruction is often in an area where there is tension

One racial group may feel that another racial group has some unfair advantage and that advantage is targeted. A race riot may turn against the police or any other people who try to enforce calm

In 2001, there were race riots in Bradford, UK. Two people were stabbed and many were injured when white and Asian gangs started fighting. Crowds at an Anti-Nazi League meeting discovered National Front sympathisers gathering in a nearby pub. When police reinforcements arrived, they were set upon. The police arrested 18 people, 11 white and seven Asian. Around the same time there were also riots in Oldham and Burnley

Application of concepts and ideas:

- Social identity theory explains that people categorise themselves as a particular group, they will view themselves as superior and discriminate against another group, which becomes the out-group
- Realistic conflict theory suggests that it is the competition for resources which leads to prejudice: race riots can often be focused on issues such as economic success
- There is in-group favouritism, which enhances the self-esteem of the in-group leading them to believe they are better than the out-group – thus, prejudice and discriminate leading to violence can occur

CULT BEHAVIOUR

Members of cults are dependent on the leader — and to a lesser extent on the others in the group — for both spiritual and material needs. Some people who study cults say that their leaders use brainwashing to ensure that their followers obey them. There are several processes at work and it is suggested that the methods cult leaders use might involve psychological knowledge. The claim is that as more is learned, for example, about behaviour modification, then cult leaders and others can use this knowledge to control their members

Application of concepts and ideas:

- Social identity theory suggests that all people are members of at least one group and see themselves as part of an in-group - everyone else, not part of the group, becomes the out-group, and the in-group members are prejudiced against the out-group members
- On a simple level, it could be said that cult members are the out-group for those who are not members, therefore, people are prejudiced against them, just because they form a group
- However, the social approach does not help to explain the fascination that people have with cults. The psychodynamic approach might suggest that people have unconscious wishes to be dominated, as they were dominated by their parents. These unconscious wishes lead to an interest in cults where, in some cases, domination is great enough for people to obey an order to kill themselves