

The Social Approach in Psychology became influential in the 1950s and '60s. Social researchers began studying the situations people act in rather than dispositional factors like personality. To do this, they developed ingenious observations and carried out lab experiments to identify and manipulate social situations.

In the post-WWII years, obedience and prejudice were high on the agenda. This is because social researchers wanted to answer the questions, *Why had the Holocaust happened?* and, *Could the Holocaust happen again?*

Earlier notions that there was something inherently callous or servile in the German national character (known as the "Germans Are Different" Hypothesis) were shown to be unsatisfactory. The growing Civil Rights Movement also drew attention to ongoing racism and discrimination in America and Europe. Mindless obedience to orders and hostility to people seen as outsiders were viewed as symptoms of a 'Fascist' mentality and this mentality was seen as responsible for the rise of Nazism in Europe.

Many Social Psychologists believed that if the causes of obedience and prejudice could be understood, their effects could be reduced. One day, fascism, racism and sexism might be abolished by psychology.

The Edexcel Specification expects you to be able to (AO1) know and understand, (AO2) apply, (AO3) analyse and evaluate the following:

- **Theories of obedience** including **Agency Theory** (p13) and **Social Impact Theory** (p19)
- **Research into obedience** including **Milgram's research** (p3) and three of his **variations** (#7, #10 and #13, p7)
- **Research into prejudice** including **Social Identity Theory** (p25) and **Realistic Conflict Theory** (p32)
- **Individual differences in obedience and prejudice**
- **Classic study** (p40): **Sherif (1954/1961) Intergroup conflict and cooperation: the Robbers Cave Experiment.**
- **One contemporary study** (p47): **Burger (2009) Replicating Milgram: would people still obey today?**
- One **key question** (p54) of relevance to today's society, discussed as a contemporary issue for society rather than an academic argument. Concepts, theories and/or research (as appropriate to the chosen key question) drawn from cognitive psychology as used in this specification.  
**Suitable example: How can knowledge of Social Psychology be used to reduce prejudice in situations such as crowd behaviour and rioting?**

*The Specification also expects you to study self reports, the Chi Squared Test and quantitative/qualitative data as methodological issues but these are detailed in another booklet*

# RESEARCH INTO OBEDIENCE

Obedience may be defined as:

**“Following orders from an authority figure, even when these conflict with what you know to be right**

The most influential research in this area was carried out by Stanley Milgram in the 1960s. Milgram’s studies were controversial at the time and continue to be so today, because his conclusions are that there is the potential for Nazism inside every one of us. There are four studies which you are expected to understand, apply and evaluate:

- Milgram’s **original study** into obedience (**1963**)
- Three of **Milgram’s variations**, reported in **1974**: specifically, **Variations #7, #10 and #13**

To show **Knowledge & Understanding (AO1)**, there is a code to help you, APRC:

1. **Aim:** what was Milgram trying to find out? It helps to think of Milgram having a general research question in mind as well as something very specific he hoped this study would show
2. **Procedure:** how was the study carried out? This includes the sample and how they were recruited, the tasks that the participants had to complete and the controls that were put in place as well as any special apparatus that was used
3. **Results:** what happened at the end of the study? This might involve scores or behaviours that were observed. It could be quantitative or qualitative data.
4. **Conclusions:** what did Milgram think the results meant? How did he explain what happened?

To show **Application (AO2)**, you should be able to explain how these studies would be used in the real world.

To show **Analysis & Evaluation (AO3)**, you must discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the study. There is a code to help you remember this: GRAVE

1. **Generalisability:** is the sample representative of ordinary people?
2. **Reliability:** were the procedures consistent and could they be replicated? Would you get the same results again?
3. **Application:** who could use the conclusions of this study and what would they do with them?
4. **Validity:** is this study really showing what it claims to show? Can its results be explained in other ways? This includes **ecological validity** which is how realistic or artificial the study is
5. **Ethics:** what ethical criticisms were levelled against Milgram’s research and how did he defend it?

## SOCIAL STUDY: MILGRAM (1963, 1974) OBEDIENCE TO AUTHORITY

### Context



This famous (or infamous) study was carried out by Stanley Milgram at Yale University in 1961. Milgram was inspired by the televised trial of the Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann. He wanted to test his hypothesis that ordinary people could be put in a social situation where they too would do the sort of things that Eichmann did – sending hundreds of thousands of Hungarian Jews to their deaths at Auschwitz. Milgram's students, when introduced to his idea, thought that Americans would never make this sort of choice – they predicted only about 1% would obey. Milgram proved them wrong.

This study is significant for students in other ways:

- It shows how scientific research proceeds, because Milgram went on to replicate his study many times, trying to see what changes to the situation would raise or lower obedience. **Burger (2009)** replicates parts of Milgram's study to see if the conclusions still hold true today (*SPOILERS: they do*).
- It illustrates features of the Social Approach, since it explores how situations dictate people's behaviour – as opposed to the **dispositional** view that our behaviour comes from our personality and values
- It illustrates the power of the observational method, gathering quantitative and qualitative data about participants in a controlled situation

### Observing Obedience

Milgram set up a **controlled environment** to carry out his **structured observation**. He did this because he wanted to reduce obedience to its essential decision, with no interference from outsiders or relationship between the person obeying the orders and their victim. The task had to be something that went against the participant's

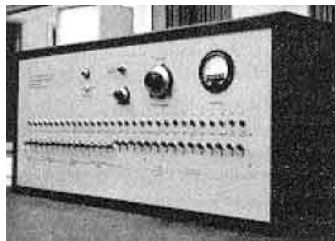
conscience, so that obeying would be a personal struggle. The participants had to be **naïve** about the situation, not aware that their obedience was being studied.

Milgram recruited his naïve participants through a newspaper ad. They believed they were taking part in a memory experiment and would be paid \$4 for their time.

Milgram watched everything through a one-way mirror. The role of the “Experimenter” was taken by a stern biology teacher in a lab coat called “Mr Williams”.



Milgram employed a **confederate** (or “**stooge**”) to help. “**Mr Wallace**”, a man in his 40s, pretended to be another participant. After a faked coin-toss, Mr Wallace became the “Learner” and the naïve participant became the “Teacher”. The Teacher watched Mr Wallace being strapped into an electric chair. The Teacher felt a 45V shock to “prove” that the electric chair was real. Participants were assured that, although the shocks were painful, they would not cause “lasting damage”.



In the room next door was the **shock generator**, a machine with switches running from 15V to 450V and labels like “Slight Shock” or “Danger”.

Mr Wallace learned a list of word-pairs. The Teacher’s job was to read words into the microphone followed by four options for the second word in the pair. Mr Wallace would indicate his answer by pressing a button. If the

answer was wrong, the Experiment ordered the Teacher to press the switch delivering a 15V shock. The shock went up by 15V with each wrong answer.

The Learner’s answers were pre-set and his cries of pain tape-recorded. The Learner got three-quarters of his answers wrong. At 300V the Learner banged on the wall and stopped answering. The Experimenter ordered the Learner to treat no answer as a wrong answer, deliver the shock and proceed with the next question.

The Experimenter had a set of pre-scripted “prods” that were to be said if the Teacher questioned any of the orders. If all four prods had to be used, the observation would stop. It also stopped if the Learner got up and left or reached 450V.

**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.*

- It is important for you to know the procedure of this study in detail – including *why* each of the features were used: *why* did the naïve participants receive a 45V shock? *why* was Mr Wallace kept in a separate room? *why* were the prods pre-scripted? and so on.
- This basic procedure is replicated in **Milgram’s Variations** and in the **Burger (2009) Contemporary Study**.

## Milgram's Study

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**Aim:** To find out naïve participants would obey orders from an authority that went against their values; specifically, to see if they would deliver electric shocks to a confederate sufficiently powerful to kill someone. *Also, to create baseline data to be compared with later Variations.*

**IV/DV:** This is a structured observation, so there is no IV. Milgram measured the highest shock level each participant would go to, treating 450V as “complete obedience” – *with the later Variation studies, this score of obedience was treated as a DV.*

**Sample:** 40 participants, all men. They were recruited through newspaper ads and they were paid \$4 once the study finished. They were aged 20-50.

**Procedure:** The procedure is described above.

**Results:** The participants were obedient up until 300V; this is the point where the Learner kicked the wall and stopped answering questions. Between 300V and 375V, 14 participants dropped out of the study (by exhausting all 4 “prods” with their questions and arguments). The remaining 26 (65%) carried on to 450V shock at the end.

Milgram also collected qualitative data. He observed the participants sweating, trembling, stuttering and

groaning. 14 showed nervous laughter.

**Conclusions:** Milgram had a number of explanations for the surprisingly high level of obedience:

- Yale University is a prestigious setting and the participants would be overawed and convinced nothing unethical could go on here
- The study seemed to have a worthy cause (memory) and was being done to further science.
- Mr Wallace seemed willing; he had volunteered (or so it seemed) and it was chance that made him the Learner (or so the participants believed).
- The participants had also volunteered and committed themselves; they were being paid and this carried a sense of obligation.
- The participants had been assured that the shocks were painful but not dangerous.
- This was a new situation for the participants and they didn't know what was appropriate or not.

Milgram went on to develop **Agency Theory** to explain the behaviour he observed.

## The Milgram Variations



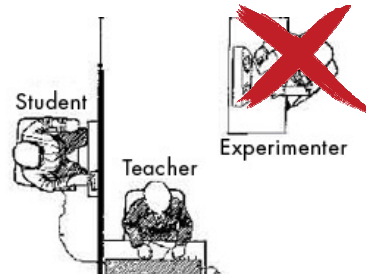
In **1974**, Milgram published ***Obedience To Authority***, a book describing his original study and 19 'Variations'. Taken together, these Variations turn the research into a lab experiment, with the original study as the Control Group and the Variations as the IV. The DV remains the level of obedience shown, measured by the maximum voltage participants would go to.

- **Variation #5** is the "Empathy Variation". This changed the script so that Mr Wallace mentioned a heart condition and at 150V started complaining about chest pains. More participants dropped out 150V, long before the Learner went silent at 300V. However, participants who continued after 150V seemed to feel they had "***passed a point of no return***" and continued all the way to 450V. **Burger (2009)** uses this variation as the basis for his Contemporary Study.
- **Variation #8** used a sample of 40 women. Their obedience levels turned out to be the same as the men's.

Students are required to have specific knowledge of these three Variations:

### Variation #7: Absent Authority

In the original study, the Experimenter (Mr Williams) sits at a desk right behind the Teacher.



In this Variation, the Experimenter gives the participants their instructions at the start, then leaves the Teacher alone in the room. The "prods" are delivered over the telephone.

- There was a significant drop in obedience, down to 9 (22.5%), and some participants gave lower shocks than they were told to do (because they thought they were unobserved).
- Milgram concludes that the physical presence of an authority figure is important for obedience.

### Variation #10: Institutional Context

The original study was carried out at Yale University, which is rather grand. In this Variation, Milgram moved the study to a run-down office in the busy town of Bridgeport. There was nothing to make the participants link things to the University: Mr Williams claimed to work for a private research firm.

- There was a drop in obedience to 19 (45.5%), but Milgram didn't think this was big enough to be significant. Participants showed more doubts and asked more

questions. One of them made notes and another thought the study was “heartless”.

- Milgram concludes that the setting is not as important for obedience as the status of the authority figure.

### Variation #13/13a: Ordinary Authority Figure

The original study used Mr Williams as the Experimenter, who looked severe and wore a lab coat. In this Variation, Mr Williams explains the procedure to the participant but then is called away. There is a second confederate present, who seems to be another participant, given the job of “writing down the times” of each test. With the Experimenter gone, this confederate suggests “a new way of doing the study,” taking the voltage up by 15V each time there’s a mistake.

- Only 20 participants did this Variation and only 4 (20%) obeyed by going to 450V.

- Milgram concludes that the status of the authority figure is important, but other features of the situation (the instructions, the shock generator) still create obedience.

In Variation 13a, with the 16 “rebel” participants, the confederate suggests swapping places: now the confederate gives the shocks and the disobedient participant writes down the times. The participant is now a bystander, watching someone else deliver the shocks.

- All 16 participants protested. Five of them tried to unplug the shock generators or restrain the confederate physically. However, 11 (68.75%) allowed the confederate to go to 450V.
- Milgram concludes that people are more willing to be bystanders than to intervene to prevent the abuse of authority

|  | <b>Original study</b><br>(baseline) | <b>#7</b><br>(absent authority) | <b>#10</b><br>(institutional context)                  | <b>#13/13a</b><br>(ordinary authority) |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|--|
| <b>Obedience</b><br>(participants going to 450V) | 65%                                 | 22.5%                           | 47.5%  | 20% / 68.75%                           |
| <b>Qualitative data</b>                          | 14 laughed nervously                | Some lied about the shock level | Expressed doubts, one took notes, one said “heartless” | In 13a, 5 physically stopped the test  |

“ The social psychology of this century reveals a major lesson: often it is not so much the kind of *person* a man is as the kind of *situation* in which he finds himself that determines how he will act” - Milgram (1974)

## The Aftermath of the Study

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When the original study was published in 1963, there was a backlash. Several newspapers condemned Yale University for treating participants so badly. Despite the support of his professor (Gordon Allport), Milgram lost his position there, a disappointment he never got over.

Child psychologist **Diana Baumrind (1964)** published a criticism of the ethics of Milgram's study: she complained that Milgram had ignored the "wellbeing" of the participants, deceiving them and putting them through traumatic stress. **Milgram (1964b)** replied with these points:

- After the end of the study, Milgram **debriefed** his participants (this is now standard procedure but Milgram was one of the first researchers to do this); he explained the truth to them, introduced them to Mr Wallace (alive and well) and checked that they were in a comfortable mental state.
- 40 participants were **interviewed** by a psychiatrist a year later and only 2 expressed lasting distress about their part in the study, but they were willing to do it again.

- A **questionnaire** was sent out to all the participants in all the Variations (see below) and only 1% expressed criticism of the way they had been treated by 84% said they were "glad" or "very glad" to have participated.
- Milgram pointed out that before the study he had approached his own students, colleagues and professional psychiatrists and no one had suspected that obedience would be as high as it turned out

The **American Psychological Association (APA)** cleared Milgram of any wrongdoing, but went on to publish the first "**Ethical Guidelines**" for researchers. These guidelines would make it impossible for Milgram to replicate his studies (however, he had already carried out his Variations by 1962). **Burger (2009)** is an example of how Milgram's study could be replicated while staying within the APA Guidelines.

Milgram died in 1984 after a series of heart attacks. Ironically, if the stress of the studies harmed anyone, it was Milgram himself!

## Evaluating Milgram

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### Generalisability

A sample of 40 is quite large, but anomalies (unusually cruel, gullible or timid people) might spoil the results. The original sample was all-male, which cannot generalise to women, and all-American, which may not generalise to other cultures. It may

also be "**time-locked**" in the early 1960s with its rather deferential culture.

When you put all of Milgram's variations together, he tested 780 people, which should remove anomalies. However, some of the Variations (like **#13**) only tested 20



participants, so a few rebellious individuals (like the ones who overpowered the confederate) might spoil things.

**Variation #8** tested women, with the same obedience level (65%) as men. This lends support to the idea that the original sample was representative.

Several cross-cultural variations on Milgram's study have been conducted. All of them also show high levels of obedience, but the exact numbers vary and they often used different sorts of tests. For example, **Meeus & Raaijmakers (1986)** found 92% obedience in the Netherlands, but they used insults rather than electric shocks.

**Burger (2009)** produced similar results to Milgram (70%). However, he only ordered participants to go up to 150V.

### Reliability

Milgram's procedure is very reliable because it can be replicated – between 1961-2 he carried out 19 Variations of his baseline study.

**Burger (2009)** replicated aspects of **Variation #5** (heart condition to test for empathy) and **Variation #17** (model refusal) as well as **Variation #8** (testing women). Burger followed Milgram's script wherever possible, indicating high reliability. Milgram also filmed parts of his study, allowing viewers to review his findings (inter-rater reliability).

Features that make for standardised procedure in this study include the pre-scripted "prods" used by the Experimenter, the tape-recorded responses from Mr Wallace and the fact that the Teacher cannot see Mr Wallace (so there will be no differences in how he looks between each test).

A serious criticism is levelled by **Gina Perry (2013)**, that Milgram did not follow standardised procedures. John Williams (the Experimenter) admitted to Perry that Milgram was only strict about the pre-scripted "prods" in the first study and afterwards Williams was free to improvise. This made obedience in the Variations seem higher than it really was.

### Application

The study demonstrates how obedience to authority works and this can be used to increase obedience in settings like schools, workplaces and prisons. Authority figures should wear symbols of authority (uniforms) and justify their authority with reference to a "greater good".

**Milgram (1974)** links his findings to the **My Lai massacre**. In 1968, a group of US soldiers ("Charlie Company") killed the 800 inhabitants of a Vietnamese village. They were obeying the orders of **Lt William Calley**. The soldiers executed old men, women and children. Despite an attempted cover-up, 14 officers were eventually tried by a military court, but only Calley was jailed. His 20 year sentence was halved on appeal and he was later paroled. He said he was only following orders from his superiors.

- Although the My Lai massacre can be explained using Milgram's study, it also links to **intergroup conflict**. Charlie Company had lost nearly 30 of its men in the recent Tet Offensive and was keen for revenge against the Viet Cong. They had been told that My Lai was full of Viet Cong sympathizers.

## Validity

Milgram's study was criticised for lacking ecological validity because the task is artificial – in real life, teachers are not asked to deliver electric shocks to learners. However, Milgram's reply was that events like the Holocaust are just as unusual and strange and people in these situations felt similarly to his participants: they had been dropped into an unfamiliar situation and didn't know how to respond.

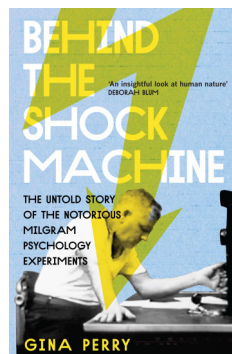
Some critics claim that the participants were play-acting: they knew (or suspected) that the set-up wasn't real. However, their visible distress (filmed by Milgram) counts against this.

### Gina Perry (2013)

claims that Milgram's data is not to be trusted. She alleges that, as an ambitious young scholar, Milgram twisted the data to make it look as if there

was "*a Nazi inside all of us*" to make himself famous. In **Variation #8** in particular, the Experimenter would not let the women back out of the study even after using 4 prods. This would make Milgram's claim that women were as obedient as men invalid.

Milgram's claim that the drop in obedience in **Variation #10** to 47.5% was "not significant" might be another indication that he was determined to conclude that obedience is high. A difference of -17.5% between experimental conditions would usually be significant.



Perry also alleges, after studying unpublished letters at Yale, that several participants *did* suspect the study was a trick. Some pointed out that the cries seemed to come from the speakers, not the room next door. Participants in **Variation #7** noticed that, when they pressed a lower voltage switch, the cries of pain still intensified.

## Ethics

The ethical debate between **Baumrind (1964)** and **Milgram (1964b)** has already been described.

The main criticism is that participants' wellbeing was ignored: they were **deceived** (about the shocks) and did not give **informed consent** (they were told it was a memory test, not an obedience test). When they tried to **withdraw**, the "prods" made this difficult for them. This sort of treatment of participants drags science into disrepute and makes it harder to recruit for future research.

The main defence is that the study would not have been possible if participants knew what was being investigated. After all, everyone who had the study described to them beforehand felt sure that *they* would disobey.

Milgram argues that, after the Holocaust and My Lai, a scientific understanding of obedience is so important it **justifies** this sort of research. He also downplayed the seriousness of the distress, claiming his participants experience "*excitement*" similar to watching a scary movie, not lasting trauma.

Milgram also extensively **debriefed** his participants and went to lengths to show that no lasting harm had befallen them.

**EXAM STYLE ANSWER**

**Evaluate Milgram's original study into obedience. (8 marks)**

- A 8-mark "evaluate" question awards 4 marks for AO1 (Describe) and 4 marks for AO3 (Evaluate).

*Description*

Milgram recruited 40 men through newspaper ads to take part in a memory test. He offered to pay them \$4 for their time.

The naïve participant became the Teacher and Mr Wallace (in reality, a confederate) became the Learner. The Teacher had to give electric shocks to the Learner when the Learner couldn't remember an answer.

The Teacher used a shock generator to deliver shocks that went up in 15V intervals. Mr Williams, the Experimenter, delivered 4 verbal "prods" if they questioned his orders.

65% of the participants went all the way up to 450V, showing complete obedience. Others disobeyed after 300V, when it looked like the Learner might be unconscious or dead.

*Evaluation*

Milgram's study is low in ecological validity. Giving electric shocks to a learner is artificial and this means the study doesn't really tell us about why people obeyed the Nazis.

For example, Mr Williams assured the participants that the shocks would do "no lasting damage" – whereas Nazis like Adolf Eichmann *knew* they were sending Jews to their deaths.

However, Milgram claims that the participants were in an unusual situation and didn't know how to behave appropriately. People involved in the Holocaust were also in a situation where normal rules didn't seem to apply.

Gina Perry accuses Milgram of twisting his results to prove there is "a Nazi inside all of us". Participants suspected the shocks weren't real when screams came from speakers, not from behind the wall.

*Conclusion*

Milgram's study is controversial but it seems to show we are much more obedient than we like to think we are. Beforehand, no one thought they would go all the way to 450V. Modern replications of Milgram, like Meeus & Raaijmakers or Burger, also show that people find it hard to

To get 4 marks for AO1, I'm making 4 clear and different points about Milgrams study.

I'm writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each.

(You have studied Variations but the question asks about the ORIGINAL study)

To get 4 marks for AO3, I'm making 4 clear and different points about evaluation issues.

Again, I'm writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each.

(I've included some facts about the study here too but these are separate from the "description" above)

To get into the top band (7-8 marks) I must remember to write a conclusion.

Notice that for a 8-mark answer you don't have to include *everything* Milgram did. I haven't mentioned the electric chair or the 45V "test shock". I haven't described the "prods" or the nervous laughter. I haven't described Milgram's conclusions.

But I have tried to make the two halves – Description and Evaluation – evenly balanced.

# SOCIAL THEORIES

There are four theories of obedience and prejudice which you are expected to understand, apply and evaluate:

- **Agency Theory**
- **Social Impact Theory**
- **Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)**
- **Realistic Conflict Theory (Sherif, 1966)**

To show **Knowledge & Understanding (AO1)**, you should be able to:

1. Explain the **context** of a theory: who came up with it and why? What were they basing their ideas on and why were these ideas important? You don't need to know the dates, but you should understand the *order* of the theories and how some of them build on others
2. Explain the **content** of a theory: what are the key terms and ideas? A lot of theories and models can be shown as diagrams or flowcharts. It's OK to copy these in the exam but you **MUST** explain them too. It's not an A-Level in drawing diagrams!
3. Explain the **research** into a theory: what experiments or case studies of unusual individuals were carried out to support this study?

To show **Application (AO2)**, you should be able to explain how this theory would explain real examples of people remembering or forgetting things – or famous examples of obedience or prejudice like the My Lai massacre.

To show **Analysis & Evaluation (AO3)**, you must discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the theory and how it compares to other theories. There is a code to help you remember how to do this: SWAC

1. **Strengths:** what research supports this theory? This includes experiments or events in real life. Don't just *describe* the support: explain *why* these examples back up the theory.
2. **Weaknesses:** what counts against the theory? This might include studies with contradictory findings, real world examples that go against the theory or just missing bits or contradictions in the theory itself.
3. **Application:** how can this theory help us? It's important to describe what people can *do* with the theory. This might include professional people (like nurses or police officers), other psychologists (who might want to research new things because of this theory) or members of the public (like yourself)
4. **Comparison:** how is this theory similar or different to other theories? Don't make the mistake of just describing another theory. You have to focus on the similarity or the difference.

## SOCIAL THEORY: MILGRAM (1973) AGENCY

### Context



This theory was developed by **Stanley Milgram**, the American psychologist who carried out the famous **Obedience Studies**.

Milgram developed his ideas as a response to Nazi war crimes, especially the trial of **Adolf Eichmann**. Milgram rejected the dispositional explanations that these crimes occurred because of something particularly brutal or mindless in the German national character. He also rejected realist explanations that the persecution of Jews was some sort of

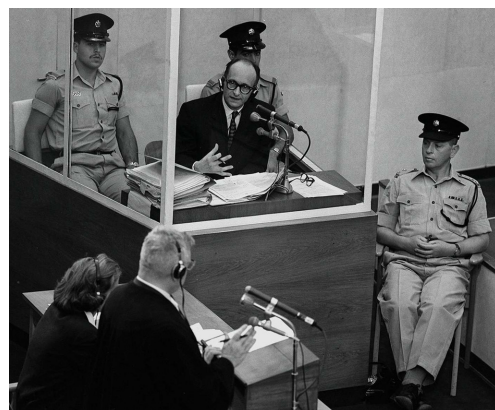
rational response to a perceived enemy.

This theory is significant for students in other ways:

- It underlies all Milgram's obedience studies, several of which are mandatory in the Social Approach.
- It is a **deterministic** theory, suggesting people have much less free will than they suppose when it comes to decision-making.
- It illustrates features of the Social Approach, since it shows how decisions that people think are personal to them are actually expressions of their social situation
- It ties in to your Key Question in Social Psychology, since it helps explain prejudice and how to reduce it

### The Agentic Shift

In the early 1960s, former-Nazi **Adolf Eichmann** was put on trial in Jerusalem for war crimes. Eichmann had been one of the main organisers of the Holocaust but, in his trial, he said he was "only following orders." Eichmann was executed for his crimes against humanity, but critics supposed this tendency towards blind obedience was part of the German national character. Others disagreed, arguing that there is blind obedience in everyone.



This was Milgram's opinion and the inspiration for his observational studies.

Agency Theory suggests humans have two mental states:

- **Autonomous:** In the Autonomous State we perceive ourselves to be responsible for our own behaviour so we feel guilt for what we do
- **Agentic:** In the Agentic State we perceive ourselves to be the agent of someone else's will; the authority figure commanding us is responsible for what we do so we feel not guilt.

We perceive some people to be “**authority figures**”. These people may carry symbols of authority (like a uniform) or possess status (like rank). An order from an authority figure triggers the **agentic shift** into the Agentic State.

When an authority figure issues an order that goes against our conscience, we experience **moral strain**. This is because we have two contradictory urges: to obey the authority figure and to obey our consciences. Going into the Agentic State removes moral strain, because we regard the authority figure as now being responsible for our actions. This is the appeal of the Agentic State.

Milgram has an **evolutionary** explanation for the Agentic Shift. He argues that obedience is a survival trait that enables tribes of early humans to flourish. Even today, society could not function without obedience. However, Nazi Germany was an example of the Agentic Shift backfiring, because people obeyed orders they should have rebelled against.

### Research into Agency Theory

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Milgram's **1961 study** into obedience was the basis for Agency Theory. Milgram observed the participants arrive in an autonomous state, go through the Agentic Shift, experience moral strain and become agents for the authority figure, carrying out acts that went against their conscience.

In 1974, Milgram published his book ***Obedience to Authority*** detailing 19 “variations” on the original obedience study. These support Agency Theory in various ways:

- **Variation #5** featured a learner with a heart condition. Obedience dropped slightly, but not much. **Burger (2009)** also found high (70%) levels of obedience when he replicated this. This suggests that empathy doesn't make people

disobedient; it just increases their moral strain, making the Agentic State more tempting.

- **Variation #10** used a run-down office rather than Yale University and obedience dropped to 47.5%. This is to be expected if the Agentic Shift is triggered by symbols of authority.

Other researchers were interested in why some participants **disobeyed**. Personality might be a factor.

**Milgram & Elms (1966)** studied the original participants and identified an **authoritarian personality** type that admired rules and was inclined to obey. This personality had already been identified by **Theodor Adorno (1950)** and linked to Fascist politics and discrimination.

Another personality factor is **Locus of Control (Julian Rotter, 1954)**, which is a need to be in control of your own behaviour. The link between a

psychological need to be in charge and disobedience to authority was explored in the Contemporary Study by **Burger (2009)**.

### Applying Agency Theory (AO2)

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#### The Holocaust

Milgram developed Agency Theory in the first place to answer the question, *Why did decent German citizens obey orders from Nazi rulers to commit genocide?* He also addresses a related question, *Could something like that happen anywhere?*

Agency Theory suggests that obedience is a natural impulse and therefore, yes, obedience to genocidal orders could happen anywhere.

There have been **cross-cultural variations** of the Milgram study. These are important because a tendency to obey authority figures might be a feature of upbringing (in hierarchical, Capitalist societies like the USA) rather than an innate human impulse (found in everyone, everywhere). One of the famous cross-cultural studies by **Meeus & Raaijmakers (1986)** found similar results in liberal Holland to what Milgram found in 1960s America. However, this study used a less distressing punishment (insults, not electric shocks). **Blass (2012)** reviewed these studies and found that, on

average, American obedience came out 5% lower than non-American studies.

This certainly suggests that genocide could happen anywhere. This makes it very important that countries develop **democratic institutions** in which authority figures are questioned and challenged.

#### Teaching in Bash Street

You could apply Agency Theory to the classroom. The theory suggests that there is an innate urge to obey someone perceived to be an authority figure. This means teachers should try to look like authority figures: smart suits and dresses, ties and badges, symbols of authority all around them, the teacher's desk higher than the students' desks.

This would mean students who wanted to disobey the teacher's orders would experience more moral strain. It might make more of them obedient; it might make others burst into tears or get angry rather than go through the Agentic Shift.

### Evaluating Agency Theory (AO3)

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#### Strengths

Milgram carried out a lot of research in support of Agency Theory. His "variations" support the idea that situational factors make participants more or less obedience, especially when they relate to the perceived

authority of the experimenter. On the other hand, dispositional factors (like empathy or gender) don't seem to make much difference at all.

Later studies (like **Burger, 2009**) have backed up Milgram's conclusions. All around the world, obedience is high,

even when authority figures give orders that are immoral.

Agency Theory also explains events like the Holocaust, the Rwandan genocide and the ethnic cleansings in Syria today when these crimes are ordered by authority figures.

### Weaknesses

Moral strain is one of the distinctive features of Agency Theory (it is missing from **Social Impact Theory**). However it is a problem for the theory. In Milgram's observational studies, moral strain was shown by the participants who *obeyed* (weeping, groaning, shaking, fainting), not by the ones who *disobeyed*. Milgram's theory suggests that the Agentic State is an escape from moral strain, but this is not what is observed in his studies.

Milgram's study suffers from a lack of **ecological validity**, since in real life teachers are not asked to electrocute students, nor were wartime Germans asked to do this by the Nazis. The artificial and unusual nature of the supporting research might count against the theory. **Meeus & Raaijmakers (1986)** replicated Milgram with insults instead of shocks; this is much more realistic but this study still put participants in an unusual position (making them pretend to interview people for a job and deliver insults from a TV screen).

### Application

The idea of the Agentic Shift may help reduce prejudice and discrimination because authority figures could tell people to be tolerant and understanding of outsiders. In fact, this is often done, with celebrities and sporting heroes visiting schools to encourage tolerance and equality (as

well as telling students not to do drugs or crime). This is one of the reasons why there is such an outcry when a celebrity like a sports star or musician makes a racist remark or behaves in a sexist way: as an authority figure, they are encouraging fans to do as they do.

Agency Theory also suggests there is always a danger of blind obedience, even from people who have no personal prejudices. To counter this, society tries to hold authority figures to account through democratic processes and "checks and balances" in government, so that no authority figure has too much power. **Holocaust Memorial Day (27 January)** is celebrated each year because Agency Theory tells us that the Holocaust could happen again, anywhere.

### Comparison

The alternative theory is **Social Impact Theory** which suggests that everyone applies Social Force to everyone else to get what they want. This is similar to Milgram's idea of the Agentic State, because people find it hard to resist pressures to obey. Both theories regard people as passive, doing whatever social pressure makes them do. However, Social Impact Theory ignores moral strain.

There are other theories that explain obedience. **Theodor Adorno (1950)** argues that some people have an "**Authoritarian Personality**" that is threatened by people who are different and enjoys following rules. Adorno's research involved questionnaires (the "**Fascism Scale**") and interviews to get quantitative and qualitative data. This theory that suggests obedience to evil orders comes from a dysfunctional personality, not a social situation.



**EXAM STYLE ANSWERS**

**Evaluate the Agency Theory of obedience. (8 marks)**

- A 8-mark “evaluate” question awards 4 marks for AO1 (Describe) and 4 marks for AO3 (Evaluate).

*Description*

Agency Theory was developed by Milgram. It says that in the presence of an authority figure people enter an Agentic State where they obey orders.

In the Agentic State, the person sees themselves as an agent for another person’s will and the authority figure, not them, will take the blame for what they do.

The Agentic Shift occurs so that the person can avoid the moral strain of disobeying an authority figure who orders them to do something that goes against their morals.

Agency Theory may tie in with the Authoritarian Personality proposed by Adorno. Authoritarian Personalities enjoy following rules and acting as the agents of strong authority figures.

*Evaluation*

Agency Theory is supported by Milgram’s observational studies into obedience where participants obeyed an authority figure by giving electric shocks to a learner.

This has a clear application because Agency Theory says people will obey if teachers surrounded themselves with symbols of authority (such as wearing a uniform and having the flag in their classroom).

A different approach is Social Impact Theory which suggests lots of other pressures that make a person obey besides the authority figure’s status.

A problem for Agency Theory is the idea of moral strain, which is supposed to go away when people enter an Agentic State. However, Milgram observed distress in the participants who obeyed, not the ones who disobeyed, which goes against the theory.

*Conclusion*

I think Agency Theory explains a lot of blind obedience, such as the Germans who obeyed Nazi orders. It suggests things like the Holocaust could happen anyway, which is why we need to be vigilant against a return of Fascism.

To get 4 marks for AO1, I’m making 4 clear and different points about Agency Theory.

I’m writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each. (I’ve probably included more than I need in each paragraph – but I’ve made a point of including something about Adorno’s ideas too)

To get 4 marks for AO3, I’m making 4 clear and different points about evaluation issues.

Again, I’m writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each. (I’ve included some facts about the theory here too but these are separate from the “description” above)

To get into the top band (7-8 marks) I must remember to write a conclusion.

**Apply Agency Theory. (4 marks)**

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- A 4-mark “apply” question awards 4 marks for AO2 (Application) and gives you a piece of stimulus material.

There has been a long running conflict between the two neighbouring countries of Ranzea and Gofani. The president of Ranzea has ordered the invasion of Gofani to take control of the country. There have been reports of soldiers from Ranzea carrying out atrocities in Gofani villages.

**Use your understanding of prejudice and/or obedience to explain these events.**

Agency Theory would explain these events by saying that the President of Ranzea is an authority figures and the soldiers are in an Agentic State.

The President probably has symbols of authority, such as appearing on TV in a military uniform with the Ranzean flag behind him.

The soldiers see themselves as agents of the President’s will, so they do not take any responsibility for what they do. They view the blame for atrocities as going to the President, not to them.

Some soldiers might feel moral strain at carrying out these atrocities, but if they enter an Agentic State this strain will go away. Soldiers with an Authoritarian Personality will take this way out.

To get 4 marks for AO2, I’m making 4 clear and different applications of Agency Theory.

The question invites me to use ANY Psychology on obedience or prejudice but this answer focuses on Agency.

Because this isn’t a 8-mark or 12-mark essay, I don’t need a conclusion. Just the 4 points will do.

## SOCIAL THEORY: LATANÉ (1981) SOCIAL IMPACT

### Context



This theory was developed by **Bibb Latané** (pronounced la-ta-nay), an American psychologist who carried out famous **studies into bystander apathy**.

The theory is an attempt to produce an underlying law that explains a whole set of studies from the '60s and '70s, including Milgram and Tajfel, into how people conform to the group they are in, follow leaders and imitate each other.

This theory is significant for students in other ways:

- It underlies Milgram's obedience study, which is a mandatory study for the Social Approach.
- It expands on Social Identity Theory, which suggests that people instinctively fall into ingroups and react negatively towards outgroups.
- It illustrates features of the Social Approach, since it shows how decisions that people think are personal to them are actually expressions of their group identity and social pressures
- It ties in to your Key Question in Social Psychology, since it helps explain prejudice and how to reduce it

### Three laws of behaviour

Latané argues that every person is potentially a "source" or a "target" of social influence – sometimes both at once. He thinks there are three rules or laws at work.

**Social Force:** This is a pressure that gets put on people to change their behaviour – if it succeeds, that is Social Impact. Social force is generated by persuasion, threat, humour, embarrassment and other influences. Social force is made up of Strength, Immediacy and Numbers:

1. **Strength:** This is how much power you believe the person influencing you has
2. **Immediacy:** This is how recent the influence is and how close to you, from an order a minute ago from your boss standing right next to you (very immediate) to an email you received from your boss last week (not very immediate)
3. **Numbers:** The more people putting pressure on you to do something, the more social force they will have

- Notice how this applies to Milgram's study and variations. Milgram also found obedience was lower when the authority figure was absent (**variation #7**) or was perceived to have less strength (**variation #13**)
- Latané suggests a mathematic equation to work out the Social Impact ( $i$ ) in any situation. This is  $i = f(SIN)$  where S, I and N are Strength, Immediacy and Numbers.

**Psychosocial Law:** This is the idea that the first source of influence has the most dramatic impact on people, but that the second, third, fourth, etc sources generate less and less Social Force. For example, being watched by one other person can make you feel awkward, but being watched by two doesn't make you twice as awkward. Increasing the audience to a hundred or even a thousand doesn't increase the sense of pressure by as much as you would think.

- The same applies to authority figures. One teacher giving you an order generates a lot of Social Force but, if you resist,

bringing in a second and a third teacher to repeat the order doesn't double or triple the Social Force; bringing in the entire school staff won't be all that effective.

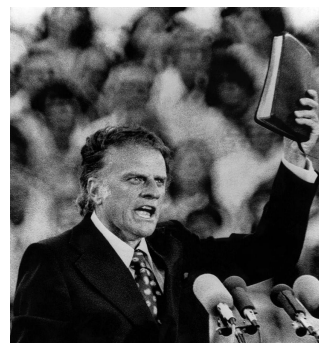
**Divisions of Impact:** Social Force gets spread out between all the people it is directed at. If all the Force is directed at a single person, that puts a huge pressure on them to conform or obey. But if the Force is directed at two people, they only experience half as much pressure each. If there are ten of them, they only feel one tenth of the pressure.

- This is known as **diffusion of responsibility** – the more of you there are, the less personal responsibility each of you will feel.
- This applies to Milgram too because his other variations showed how obedience went down when the participant had a rebellious partner.
- Latané has an equation for this too:  $i = f(1/SIN)$

### Research into Social Impact

**Latané (1981)** gives a number of examples of Social Impact. An interesting one involves the US Christian televangelist **Billy Graham** (*right*). The hypothesis was that Billy Graham would make more converts in front of small audiences. Latané researched the numbers of people who responded to Graham's appeal for converts and found that when the audiences were small, people were more willing to sign cards allowing local vicars to contact them later. This

demonstrates **divisions of impact** (also known as **diffusion of responsibility**).



**Sedikides & Jackson (1990)** carried out a field experiment in the bird house at a zoo. A confederate told groups of visitors not to lean on the railings near the bird cages. The visitors were then observed to see if they obeyed.

If the confederate was dressed in the uniform of a zookeeper, obedience was high, but if he was dressed casually, it was lower. This demonstrates varying Social Force, in particular S (Strength) because of the

perceived authority of the confederate.

As time passed, more visitors started ignoring the instruction not to lean on the railing. This also shows Social Force, especially I (Immediacy), because as the instruction gets less immediate it has less impact.

Divisions of impact were also studied. Some visitors were alone but others were in groups of up to 6. The larger the group size, the more disobedience was observed.

### Applying Social Impact Theory (AO2)

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#### Different Kinds of Power

A lot depends on whether you *perceive* the person giving the orders to be an authority figure.

**French & Raven (1959)** identified different types of authority: **(i) legitimate power** (authority figures with high status), **(ii) reward power** (those who have money or who can perform favours), **(iii) coercive power** (people who can punish you), **(iv) expert power** (people seen as knowledgeable) and **(v) referent power** (people who belong to groups you already respect).

This fits in with Social Impact Theory because it explains the reasons why a person's orders may have Social Force. "Referent Power" also applies to Tajfel's **Social Identity Theory** because it shows that orders coming from a member of our ingroup carry more Social Force than orders coming from an outgroup member. This is why a gang member might have more authority over a young boy than a teacher: the teacher has legitimate authority but the gang member might have reward power, coercive power

and referent power because the boy regards him as his ingroup.

#### Diffusion of Responsibility

Being part of a large group makes people feel anonymous and this reduces their feelings of responsibility. It might make them less likely to obey.

**Latané & Darley (1968)** carried out a famous experiment into this. Participants sat in booths discussing health issues over an intercom. One of the speakers was a confederate who would pretend to have a heart attack. If there was only one other participant, they went for help 85% of the time; this dropped to 62% if there were two other participants and 31% if there were 4+.

No one was giving orders in this study, but the rule "go and get help when someone collapses" is a sort of order that is present all the time in society. Following these sort of social rules is called **prosocial behaviour** and breaking the rules is antisocial behaviour. Social Impact Theory explains prosocial behaviour as well as obedience.

## Evaluating Social Impact Theory (AO3)

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### Strengths

There's a growing body of research supporting Social Impact Theory. In addition, the theory also makes sense of a lot of Classic studies from the '60s and '70s that used to seem unrelated – like **Latané & Darley (1968)** into diffusion of responsibility, **Tajfel (1970)** into intergroup discrimination and **Milgram (1963)** into obedience. In hindsight, all of these studies can be seen as looking at different aspects of Social Impact.

There have been more recent additions to Social Impact Theory. **Latané et al. (1996)** developed Dynamic Social Impact Theory to pay attention to how minorities and majorities influence each other, such as how people tend to change their views to match the group they are in but why they sometimes “stick to their guns”.

### Weaknesses

Social Impact pays a lot of attention to the characteristics of the person giving the orders but not much to the person receiving them. For example, there may be personality types that are particularly compliant (go along with anything) or rebellious. A person may be happy to go along with some sorts of orders but draw the line at others – such as orders that offend them morally or embarrass them socially.

A similar problem is that Social Impact Theory treats people as passive. It proposes that anybody will do anything if the right amount of Social Force is brought to bear on them. However, people sometimes obey orders while at the same time subverting them. An example might be Otto Schindler who handed Jewish

employees over to the Nazis during WWII while secretly helping many others to escape.

### Application

The idea of a mathematical formula to calculate Social Impact is very useful. Latané believes that, if you know the number (N) of people involved and the immediacy (I) of the order and the strength (S) of the authority figure, you can calculate exactly how likely someone is to obey (i) using the formula  $i = f(SIN)$ . This means you can predict whether laws will be followed, whether riots will break out and whether 9B will do their homework.

The theory suggests if you want to get people to obey, you need to direct Social Force at them when they are in small groups and ideally stop them getting together into large groups. This is why some repressive governments try to stop people using social media and gathering for public meetings. Because orders need to be immediate it is important to repeat them often and put them on signs, TV adverts and regular announcements.

### Comparison

**Milgram's Agency Theory** is very simplistic compared to Social Impact Theory. Milgram suggests we have evolved to go into an obedient mental state around anyone we recognise as an authority. There's not much evidence for this in general. Social Impact Theory suggests many features of Agency Theory are true – that the strength (S) of the authority figure is an important predictor of how obedient someone will be – but there are other situational factors as well, like the numbers of people involved

(N) and the immediacy (I) of the orders.

However, Agency Theory explains some things better than Social Impact Theory. For example, in **Variation #10**, obedience was lower in a run-down office compared to Yale University. Milgram explains this through the **prestige** of the setting adding to the

authority figure's status, but this is hard for Latané to give a mathematical value to. Similarly, Milgram has an explanation for the shaking and weeping his participants engaged in – **moral strain**. There's no discussion of moral strain in Social Impact Theory, which views people as either obeying or disobeying and nothing in between.

### EXAM STYLE ANSWERS

#### Evaluate Social Impact Theory as an explanation of obedience. (8 marks)

- A 8-mark "evaluate" question awards 4 marks for AO1 (Describe) and 4 marks for AO3 (Evaluate).

##### Description

Social Impact Theory was developed by Bibb Latané. It says that obedience happens when Social Force is too strong for us to resist. Social Force can be measured with the formula  $i = f(SIN)$ .

S is the Strength of the person giving the orders and this is based on how they are perceived by others. I is the Immediacy of the order, with recent orders having more Social Force than old ones. N is the Number of people giving the order.

There are some other factors in Social Impact. For instance, the division of impact means that Social Force gets split between the people it is aimed at. This makes it easier to disobey if you are part of a group but harder if you are alone.

Social Impact Theory explains the results in Milgram's experiments, such as why there was less obedience in Variation #7 when the authority figure spoke down a telephone.

##### Evaluation

Social Impact Theory has studies to back it up, such as Sedikides & Jackson who gave orders to visitors at a zoo. Large groups of visitors were more likely to disobey, which shows division of impact.

The mathematical formula has a clear application. You could use it to work out exactly how likely someone is to disobey in any situation, so long as you can work out the Social Force and you know how many people are involved.

Social Impact Theory is much more complex than Agency Theory. It includes the different sorts of authority suggested

To get 4 marks for AO1, I'm making 4 clear and different points about Social Impact Theory.

I'm writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each.

(I've probably included more than I need in each paragraph – but I've made a point of including something about Milgram's ideas too)

To get 4 marks for AO3, I'm making 4 clear and different points about evaluation issues.

Again, I'm writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each.

(I've included some facts about the theory here too but these are separate from the "description" above)

by French & Raven, such a referent authority.

However, Agency Theory includes some things that Social Impact Theory ignores, such as moral strain. Milgram explains why his participants cried and fainted, but Social Impact Theory only looks at how likely people are to obey, not how they feel about it.

### *Conclusion*

Social Impact is a theory that covers a lot more than just obedience. It also explains diffusion of responsibility. This makes it a bit of a vague theory. It's not a theory of obedience in particular, unlike Agency Theory.

To get into the top band (7-8 marks) I must remember to write a conclusion.

### **Apply Social Impact Theory. (4 marks)**

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- A 4-mark "apply" question awards 4 marks for AO2 (Application) and gives you a piece of stimulus material.

Derek wants to impress the bigger boys in his gang. He brings a knife to school to show to Troy and Vincent. His form teacher, Miss Earnest, spots the cigarettes in Derek's pocket and tells him to hand them in. Troy and Vincent are in the classroom and Derek refuses. The other students wait to see what Miss Earnest will do next.

**Using your knowledge of psychology, explain Derek's behaviour and what Miss Earnest can do to make him follow her instruction.**

Social Impact Theory would explain why Derek disobeys. It is because Miss Earnest has not applied enough Social Force to make an impact on him.

Miss Earnest has legitimate authority (according to French & Raven) but Troy and Vincent have referent authority (they are part of Derek's ingroup) which cancels that out.

Miss Earnest needs to increase her strength (S). She could threaten to punish Derek (which is coercive authority) and to reward him if he obeys her (which is reward authority). She could explain to him about the dangers of knives (which might give her knowledge authority).

Alternatively, she could take Derek outside, away from the other students and repeat her order. Now that Derek is on his own there will be no division of impact, making it harder for him to disobey.

To get 4 marks for AO2, I'm making 4 clear and different applications of Social Impact.

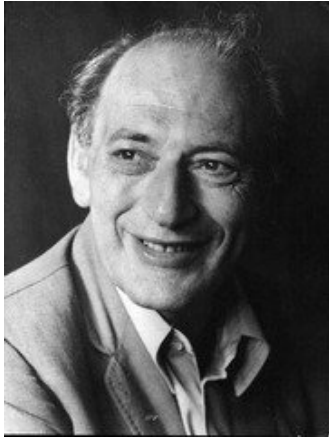
I'm giving 2 explanations for Derek's behaviour and 2 suggestions.

Because this isn't a 8-mark or 12-mark essay, I don't need a conclusion. Just the 4 points will do.



## SOCIAL THEORY: TAJFEL & TURNER (1979) SOCIAL IDENTITY

### Context



This theory was developed by **Henri Tajfel** and **John Turner**, two British psychologists. Tajfel (*right*) was a Polish Jew whose family were killed in Nazi death camps. He settled in Britain but devoted himself to researching prejudice and discrimination. Social Identity Theory (SIT) says we get our self-esteem from the groups we belong to. It opposes “Realist” theories because it suggests that group membership by itself is sufficient to create prejudice, without any need for competition over resources.

This theory is significant for students in other ways:

- It opposes Realistic Conflict Theory, which suggests conflict based on irrational needs for identity rather than rational competition for scarce resources. SIT proposes that people might make choices that cost *them* what they need, in order to defeat out-groups.
- It illustrates features of the Social Approach, since it shows how decisions that people think are personal to them are actually expressions of their group identity and their group needs
- It ties in to your Key Question in Social Psychology, since it helps explain prejudice and how to reduce it

*By the way, Tajfel's name is pronounced TIE-FELL.*

### Social Identity

It's widely recognised that people tend to identify with their groups. They also tend to have negative views about some other groups – “outgroups”. But why do some outgroups attract hostility and discrimination? Tajfel wondered what made the Nazis (powerful and rich) want to destroy his Jewish family and neighbours (who were weak and very poor). It didn't seem to Tajfel there was any “realistic conflict” going on, because the Polish Jews weren't in competition with the Nazis and didn't have anything the

Nazis needed. So he looked for a different explanation.

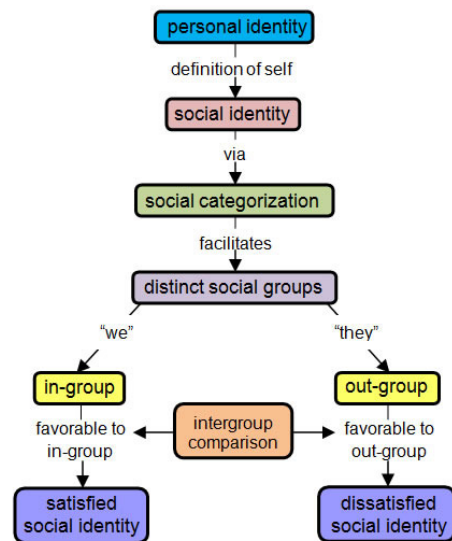
Social Identity Theory proposes that group formation goes through three stages:

1. **Social Categorisation:** this is seeing yourself as part of a group. As well as a **personal identity** (who you see yourself as) everyone has a **social identity** (the groups they see themselves as being a part of). Social identity may involve

belonging to groups based on your gender, social class, religion, school or friends.

2. **Social Identification:** once you have a social identity, you automatically perceive everyone else you meet as either part of your **ingroup** (the ones who share the same social identity as you) or the **outgroup**. You pay particular attention to ingroup members and adopt their values, attitudes, appearance and behaviour.
3. **Social Comparison:** this is viewing your social identity as superior to others; it comes from regarding the products of your ingroup (the things your ingroup does, their attitudes or utterances) as better than the products of an outgroup. This leads to **prejudice** and, if you have the power to influence the outgroup, it will lead to **discrimination** too.

Tajffel & Turner argue that **self-esteem** is at the core of social identity. We need to feel good about ourselves so we need to feel good about the groups we belong to.



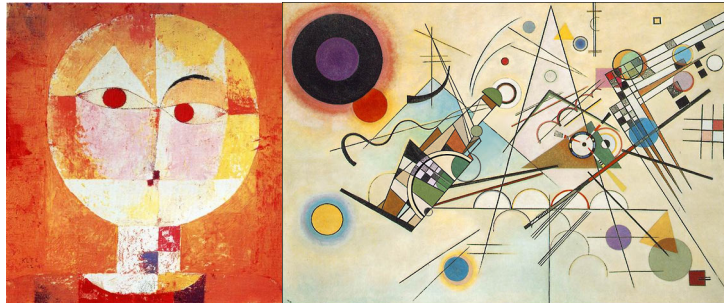
- Not everyone identifies with their ingroup to the same extent. Personality may be a variable here, such as Adorno's **Authoritarian Personality Type**: people who get their self-esteem from social identity rather than personal identity.
- There needs to be grounds for making comparisons with other groups. Football fans tend to compare themselves to supporters of a rival club, but not to teams in much higher or lower leagues.

### Research into Social Identity Theory

The most famous research into SIT was carried out by **Tajfel et al. (1970)**. These were known as **"Minimal Groups" studies**, because Tajfel was looking at groups that people had the minimal possible reason to feel loyal to.

Tajfel recruited Bristol schoolboys aged 14-15 and divided them into minimal groups. In one study, this was

done by showing them dots on a screen and telling some boys they had over-estimated and others they had under-estimated the number of dots; in another Tajfel showed the boys paintings by the artists Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky, then telling some boys they had shown preference for one, some boys the other. In fact, the boys were assigned to groups randomly but they were not told this.



Klee

Kandinsky

The boys were given the task of assigning points from a book of tables (Tajfel called them “matrices”). Each matrix offered different allocations of points to a pair of anonymous boys. The points converted into money – 10 points became 1 pence – but the boys didn’t know which people they were giving points to.

The boys would be fair if allocating points to two outgroup members or two ingroup members. However, if allocating to an ingroup and an outgroup member, they consistently awarded more points/money to boys in their own group – **ingroup favouritism**.

|                          |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Boy No. 1<br>(in-group)  | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| Boy No. 2<br>(out-group) | 1 | 3 | 5 | 7  | 9  | 11 | 13 | 15 | 17 | 19 | 21 | 23 | 25 |

Fairest allocation

If the boys had to choose between **maximum joint profit** (an arrangement which awarded the most possible points/money to the two anonymous boys) and **maximum difference** (an arrangement that awarded more points/money to their ingroup), they would choose maximum difference.

They would do this even if it meant awarding their ingroup less than the maximum ingroup profit. In other words, they would shortchange their ingroup, so long as it gave them an opportunity to do better than the outgroup.

|                          |   |   |   |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|--------------------------|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Boy No. 1<br>(in-group)  | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| Boy No. 2<br>(out-group) | 1 | 3 | 5 | 7  | 9  | 11 | 13 | 15 | 17 | 19 | 21 | 23 | 25 |

Maximising the difference

Largest reward to in-group

Maximum joint profit

- Tajfel concludes that outgroup discrimination is easily triggered – just perceiving someone else to be in an outgroup is enough to do it.
- There was no need for the boys to be in competition – they chose option that were competitive even when the matrices gave them fair options as well.
- The boys would choose fair splits of points some of the time, but Tajfel suggests this is less likely to happen when the groups are not “minimal groups” – when they are based on something more important than counting dots or liking artists.

### Applying Social Identity Theory (AO2)

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#### Cliques and Football Fans



People often complain about “cliques” – groups of friends who think they are superior to everyone else around them and won’t let other people join their circle. Tajfel explains this because the people in the clique base their self-esteem on the status of their social circle. They over-value the products of the ingroup (how funny their jokes are, how stylishly they dress) and under-value the products of the outgroup (ie everyone else).

Fans behave in the same way. If you support a football team, your self-esteem is linked to the success of the team. If the team wins, you feel good. Even if it loses, you can feel good by believing fans of other teams are inferior to you. Football fans show Social Identification by wearing their team colours, singing team chants, or talking incessantly about the new striker or the old manager.

Ideally, people should develop a sense of **personal identity** separate from social identity and base their self-esteem on that. Then they wouldn’t have to look down on anyone.

#### Challenging Perceptions

It’s important to remember that social identity is a perception, not a fact. You only belong to the groups you believe you belong to. Many strategies to tackle discrimination and prejudice work by getting people to expand their sense of social identity. If people see themselves and their neighbours as all members of a bigger ingroup, then social comparison will stop.

For example, in the 1980s an American charity single for African famine relief was entitled “**We Are The World**”. The lyrics challenge the idea that starving Africans are an outgroup.

Of course, sometimes members of two groups can put their differences aside and unite against another outgroup – terrorists, an enemy country, immigrants, etc. Unscrupulous leaders may whip up this sort of social identity. For example, the Nazis united Germans by presenting Jews as a hated outgroup.

## Evaluating Social Identity Theory (AO3)

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### Strengths

SIT is supported by **Tajfel et al.'s 1970 study** into minimal groups. The research showed how boys will discriminate against an outgroup (even an outgroup that contains their own friends) and show favouritism to an ingroup (even an ingroup made up of strangers) and that this will happen when the group identity is based on something as flimsy as "being an over-estimator" or "preferring the art of Paul Klee".

SIT also provides an explanation for why discrimination occurs even when they outgroup is no threat to the ingroup and there is no competition over resources. If self-esteem is based on social identity, then some people *need* to put down outgroups in order to feel good about themselves.

### Weaknesses

The "Minimal Groups" studies that support SIT have been criticised for using artificial tasks that lack ecological validity. However, Tajfel would contend that, if boys will be discriminatory over trivial and pointless tasks like this, how much more likely are they to discriminate when something important is at stake!

Another criticism of the studies is that adolescent boys are naturally competitive and the matrices looked like a competition of some sort. The boys may have assumed Tajfel wanted them to "win" at this game. When participants spoil an experiment by acting in the way they think (rightly or wrongly) that the researcher wants, this is called **demand characteristics**.

There are gaps in the theory, such as why some people cling to social

identity for their self-esteem more than others. A theory of personality like **Adorno's Authoritarian Personality** might explain this better.

### Application

Strategies that increase people's sense of personal identity may reduce prejudice, especially if they raise self-esteem at the same time. Counselling (especially using **Cognitive Therapy**) may be one way of doing this. Religion sometimes gives people a sense of self-worth, but it can also create a very powerful sense of social identity and lead to some of the worst discrimination.

Encouraging people to see themselves as part of a larger social identity can combat outgroup discrimination. Some people think teaching "Britishness" in schools may reduce conflict between groups, if they all see themselves as British citizens. However, this may backfire if it leads to more conflict with people who are seen as "un-British". Again, religion can bring together people of many nationalities and backgrounds. As St Paul says: "*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Galatians 3: 28). Other religions make similar appeals, but they can also create discrimination against non-believers.

### Comparison

**Sherif's Realistic Conflict Theory (1966)** stands in contrast to SIT. RCT claims that prejudice is produced by competition and happens when there is (or seems to be) a scarcity of resources like food, money, jobs or status.

RCT is backed up by **Sherif's "Robbers Cave" study (1954)** where boys showed outgroup discrimination when a tournament was arranged between them. This started with name-calling and food fights but became increasingly violent. As with "Minimal

Groups", this is a study of schoolboys that may not generalise to adult behaviour. Unlike "Minimals Groups", boys squabbling at a summer camp possessed much more ecological validity than filling books of matrices.

### EXAM STYLE ANSWERS

#### Evaluate the Social Identity Theory of prejudice. (8 marks)

- A 8-mark "evaluate" question awards 4 marks for AO1 (Describe) and 4 marks for AO3 (Evaluate).

##### *Description*

Social Identity Theory (SIT) was developed by Tajfel & Turner. It says that between groups is based on the need for self-esteem and happens even when there is no conflict over resources.

Social categorisation is when you see yourself as part of a group which becomes your ingroup. Tajfel thinks your self-esteem is linked to how successful your ingroup is.

Social identification is when you take on the attitudes, behaviours and values of your ingroup. It might include dressing or acting like other ingroup members.

Social comparison is when you see your ingroup as better than the outgroups you meet. You over-value the products of the ingroup and under-value the products of outgroups, leading to prejudice.

##### *Evaluation*

SIT is supported by Tajfel's "Minimal Group" studies which showed how boys will discriminate about outgroups even when social identity is based on something as irrelevant to them as modern art.

However, these studies are artificial because the boys had to assign points from books of matrices to strangers, which is not like real-life racism or sexism which normally involves treating actual people badly.

On the other hand, Tajfel would say if the boys were prepared to discriminate against anonymous boys on over pennies on the basis of differences in art, how much more likely they would be to discriminate when there are important things at stake.

To get 4 marks for AO1, I'm making 4 clear and different points about SIT.

I'm writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each.

(I've probably included more than I need in each paragraph – but I've made a point of including the three stages of SIT)

To get 4 marks for AO3, I'm making 4 clear and different points about evaluation issues.

Again, I'm writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each.

(I've included some facts about the theory here too but these are separate from the "description" above)

Personality is a variable SIT doesn't take into account. Adorno suggests that Authoritarian Personalities are much more likely to discriminate because their self-esteem is more strongly linked to their social identity.

### *Conclusion*

SIT suggests that intergroup conflict comes from an irrational side of human nature that will always be with us. It is depressing to think that, even if we can abolish hunger and poverty, prejudice will still exist so long as there are groups.

To get into the top band (7-8 marks) I must remember to write a conclusion.

### **Apply Social Identity Theory. (4 marks)**

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- A 4-mark "apply" question awards 4 marks for AO2 (Application) and gives you a piece of stimulus material.

After the release of a popular vampire film some teenagers have split into two groups. One group loves vampires ('The Vamps') whilst the other group loves werewolves ('The Howlers'). This situation is causing tension and college staff are concerned about the amount of name-calling and hostility between the groups.

**Using your knowledge of psychology, explain the conflict between the students and what the college staff can do about it.**

Social Identity Theory (SIT) would explain that the teenagers have different social identities and view each other as belonging to outgroups.

Because of Social Comparison they discriminate against outgroups, which explains the name-calling. They do this because their self-esteem is tied in with their group being best.

The college staff could get the teenagers to focus on how they all love the same film so really they all belong to the same ingroup. Then the werewolf-fans wouldn't threaten the vampire-fans self-esteem.

The staff could give the teenagers a different outgroup to focus on, like a competition against another college. Then the other college would be the outgroup and the teenagers would "pull together" and see themselves as one big ingroup.

To get 4 marks for AO2, I'm making 4 clear and different applications of Social Identity Theory.

The question doesn't specify SIT – I could answer with another theory or a mix of two.

Because this isn't a 8-mark or 12-mark essay, I don't need a conclusion. Just the 4 points will do.



## SOCIAL THEORY: SHERIF (1966) REALISTIC CONFLICT

### Context



This theory was developed by **Muzafer Sherif**, an American psychologist who carried out the famous “**Robbers Cave**” study into group conflict.

The theory is a “Realist” theory because it proposes that conflict between groups isn’t based on something irrational but on an actual need for resources. It’s a “conflict” theory because it rejects the idea (common in the ‘60s) that groups could share and cooperate.

This theory is significant for students in other ways:

- It underlies Sherif’s “Robbers Cave” study, which is a Classic Study for the Social Approach.
- It opposes Social Identity Theory, which suggests conflict is not “realist” but is based on irrational needs for identity. SIT proposes that people might make choices that cost *them* what they need, in order to defeat out-groups.
- It illustrates features of the Social Approach, since it shows how decisions that people think are personal to them are actually expressions of their group identity and their group needs
- It ties in to your Key Question in Social Psychology, since it helps explain prejudice and how to reduce it

### Conflict between groups

It’s widely recognised that people tend to identify with their groups. They also tend to have negative views about some other groups – “outgroups”. But why do some outgroups attract hostility and discrimination but others are treated neutrally or even admired? For example, the British have some negative stereotypes about the French (eating frogs!) and the Germans (no sense of humour!) but not the Dutch or the Danes. This is what Realistic Conflict Theory (RCT) tries to explain.

**Realistic conflict theory** states that whenever there are two or more

groups that are seeking the same **limited resources**, this will lead to conflict, negative stereotypes and beliefs, and discrimination between the groups. The conflict can lead to increasing animosity toward the groups and can cause an ongoing feud to develop.

In the case of Britain, France and Germany, these are all European countries that used to compete for imperial colonies and still compete for power in Europe. There are only so many colonies or European jobs/money to go round, so these are **limited resources**. Countries like the



Netherlands and Denmark never competed with us for power, control or wealth, so we don't have negative stereotypes or cruel jokes about them.

Conflict, negative stereotypes and beliefs, and discrimination between groups can be reduced in situations where two or more groups are seeking to obtain some superordinate goals.

**Superordinate goals** are mutually-desirable goals that cannot be obtained without the participation of two or more groups.

- Cruel jokes about unemotional Germans and frog-eating French have grown less common since the creation of the EU, with British, French and German people trading and working together. They have more superordinate goals so the prejudice has decreased.
- After the 2015 Paris attacks, British football fans sang the French national anthem in Wembley. The superordinate goal of defeating ISIS meant that negative stereotypes about the French disappeared.
- It isn't important that there should be *actual* conflicts over resources so much as **perceived conflict**. For example, there are people with prejudice against immigrants because they believe "they are coming over here to take our jobs". This is quite separate from whether immigrants actually *do* take jobs that British workers want. Immigrants might take jobs like fruit-picking that British workers don't want to do.
- Another related idea is the **Zero-Sum Fate**. This is the idea that if one side gains, someone else has to lose out. Some times this might be true, but not always. Realistic Conflict occurs when people *believe* that an out group can only benefit at their expense. So, if they see out group members doing well, they conclude that they must be losing out somehow.

### Research into Realistic Conflict

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Sherif carried out the famous "**Robbers Cave**" study that showed Realistic Conflict in action. This is the Classic Study in Social Psychology so you will be learning about it elsewhere.

In the 1970s, the **Michigan National Election Studies** survey gathered data on attitudes towards a government plan to merge schools and bus white children to schools alongside black children. In these surveys, white respondents opposed the idea of their

children being schooled alongside African Americans. RCT would say this is because the white families felt that the privilege they enjoyed (wealth, better education, better career prospects) would be threatened if they had to share it with the children of black families.

If RCT is correct, you would expect negative prejudices to increase when there was a shortage of resources.

**Christine Brain (2015)** describes the conflict between Russia and Ukraine

as a conflict over who controls the supply of gas to Europe, since Russian pipelines have to pass through Ukrainian territory.

**John Duckitt (1994)** argues there are two types of realistic conflict, depending on whether or not the two groups have equal power. Standard Realistic Conflict is between two “peer groups” who are equal but competing.

Sometimes an ingroup will be in conflict with an outgroup that has low status and isn’t a real threat. This is “**domination of the outgroup by the ingroup**”. The dominated group might accept their inferior status or might resent it. The powerful ingroup decides whether the rebellion is unjustified (leading to prejudice) or justified (leading to social change).

### Applying Realistic Conflict Theory (AO2)

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#### Cooperation between groups

If conflict comes from a conflict over scarce resources, it follows that conflict decreases when cooperation results in more shared resources. To reduce prejudice **superordinate goals** can be set up. This is where the resources can only be won if the groups cooperate rather than compete.

Sherif demonstrated the power of superordinate goals to reduce conflict in the “**Robbers Cave**” study (1954). When the Eagles and the Rattlers had to work together to fix a water pipe and choose movies to watch, the hostility between the groups lessened.

There are real world projects to do the same thing. The **European Union** was formed to make a future war in Europe impossible by getting European countries to work towards superordinate goals through trade and moving labour forces. The **Olympic Movement** also tries to promote peace by getting countries to share superordinate goals of sporting achievement that will make them less likely to compete over resources.

#### Challenging Perceptions

Quite often, people *perceive* a competition over scarce resources when really there’s enough to go round. For example, because of falling birth rates and an ageing population, most European countries need immigrants to come and do jobs and pay taxes – there are too many jobs that need doing, not too few.

**Gordon Allport (1954)** proposed the **Contact Hypothesis**, which says that the more contact people have with outgroups, the more their prejudices will be reduced. This is called the “**reconceptualization of group categories**”. Allport agrees with Sherif that the groups must work together towards superordinate goals, but also with Duckitt that the groups need to have equal status when they meet. He adds that there needs to be personal contact between the groups – they have to mingle and get to know each other to challenge stereotypes. Another factor is the support of the authorities for the meeting – you can’t have authority figures opposing the contact.

## Evaluating Realistic Conflict Theory (AO3)

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### Strengths

There's a lot of research in support of Realistic Conflict, especially the "Robbers Cave" study and also a lot of attitude surveys like the Michigan National Election Studies. It is also backed up by common sense (**face validity**). Football fans tend to have negative stereotypes about rival teams, but no particular view about teams much lower (or higher) in the league that aren't in competition with their team.

Extremists who try to whip up prejudice often claim that outgroups represent a threat to people's jobs, education, money or privileges. In other words, they try to create a perception (which may not be true) that resources are scarce and the outgroup are competitors. This is exactly what RCT would predict.

### Weaknesses

The "Robbers Cave" study was carried out on American schoolboys, not on adults. Testosterone and upbringing might make schoolboys especially likely to form tribes and be competitive. There's a danger in generalising from them to adult behaviour.

Attitude surveys suffer from a "chicken and egg" problem of validity. Which comes first, the prejudice or the perception of competition? Bigoted people will often create the idea of competition to justify their prejudices, but the prejudices may in fact come first. This is the insight from Social Identity Theory (below).

### Application

The idea of superordinate goals has a clear application for reducing

prejudice and discrimination. The ingroup and outgroup need to work together towards something that is valued by both of them; then they see each other as members of the one group, with a shared goal of achieving resources through cooperation. This is how Sherif defused prejudice in "Robbers Cave".

Allport's Contact Hypothesis applies here, because prejudice will be reduced if group members get to mingle freely with the outgroup and question their own stereotypes. It is important that leaders and authority figures support this mingling. This is the base of multicultural education that brings children into contact with other children of different ethnicity. Schools often have days where they celebrate the religion, food and dress of minorities.

### Comparison

**Tajfel & Turner's Social Identity Theory (1979)** stands in stark contrast to RCT. SIT claims that prejudice is natural and instinctive and happens immediately, as soon as you categorise yourself as belonging to an ingroup (social categorisation) and notice other people belonging to an outgroup (social comparison). This prejudice has nothing to do with competition over resources.

SIT is backed up by **Tajfel's "Minimal Group" studies (1970)** where boys showed outgroup discrimination even though they weren't in competition with the outgroup – they would choose options from the matrix booklets that offered scarce resources (in points) *in order to create competition* rather than the options that would give their ingroup more

points. As with “Robbers Cave”, this is a study of schoolboys that may not generalise to adult behaviour. Unlike “Robbers Cave”, assigning points from matrix booklets was deeply artificial and may lack ecological validity.

There are other theories that explain prejudice as well. **Theodor Adorno (1950)** argues that some people have an “**Authoritarian Personality**” that is

threatened by people who are different and enjoys discriminating against outgroups that have less status. Adorno’s research involved questionnaires (the “**Fascism Scale**”) and interviews to get quantitative and qualitative data. Again, this is a theory that suggests groups do not need competition in order for prejudices to form.

**EXAM STYLE ANSWERS**

**Evaluate the Realistic Conflict Theory of prejudice. (8 marks)**

- A 8-mark “evaluate” question awards 4 marks for AO1 (Describe) and 4 marks for AO3 (Evaluate).

*Description*

Realistic Conflict Theory (RCT) was developed by Sherif. It says that there is conflict between groups rather than cooperation and this happens for real reasons, like a lack of resources to go round. When competition occurs, prejudice forms.

Scarce resources may be water and food but also things like money, jobs, places in schools or even social resources (like friends). This might explain “bitchiness” in school friendship groups.

John Duckitt goes a bit further, suggesting that conflict can happen even when an outgroup has lower status and isn’t really a competitor over resources. This is because the low-status group might resent the high-status group but the high-status group doesn’t think this is justified.

Conflict can be reduced if the ingroup and outgroup work together towards superordinate goals. This is when they start cooperating rather than competing to achieve the resources they want.

*Evaluation*

RCT is supported by studies like Sherif’s “Robbers Cave” study, which showed groups of boys getting into conflict when they were put into competition. Sherif used superordinate goals to remove the competition and the boys became friendly again.

This has a clear application because RCT says you can reduce prejudice by getting people from different groups to meet and work together in a spirit of cooperation. Allport’s Contact Hypothesis says if groups mingle they will lose their stereotypes.

Social Identity Theory has a completely different view. It says prejudice happens automatically when groups form and doesn’t require any competition.

SIT is supported by Tajfel’s Minimal Groups study where the boys discriminated against the outgroup even though they didn’t have to. They did this by assigning points in an unfair way.

To get 4 marks for AO1, I’m making 4 clear and different points about Realistic Conflict Theory.

I’m writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each.

(I’ve probably included more than I need in each paragraph – but I’ve made a point of including something about Duckitt’s ideas too)

To get 4 marks for AO3, I’m making 4 clear and different points about evaluation issues.

Again, I’m writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each.

(I’ve included some facts about the theory here too but these are separate from the “description” above)

### Conclusion

RCT suggests there is a real reason for group conflict (or at least group members believe there is a real reason) but SIT suggests there is something instinctive and irrational about prejudice. RCT ignores this irrational side to human nature which is studied by Tajfel, Adorno and Milgram.

To get into the top band (7-8 marks) I must remember to write a conclusion.

### Apply Realistic Conflict Theory. (4 marks)

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- A 4-mark “apply” question awards 4 marks for AO2 (Application) and gives you a piece of stimulus material.

Ashlinn, Bailee and Raven are three friends who fall out when a new girl, Lilo, joins their school. Lilo and Raven have a sleepover party together, but Ashlinn and Bailee go on social media and start untrue rumours about them. Lilo and Raven respond by spreading their own cruel gossip about Ashlinn and Bailee. Eventually, the Headmistress has to intervene and call all four girls to her office.

**Using your knowledge of psychology, explain the girls’ conflict and what the Headmistress can do about it.**

Realistic Conflict Theory (RCT) would explain the girls falling out because they have a resource (friendship) that they are in competition over. Lilo has taken Raven away from Ashlinn and Bailee.

Sherif would argue that the two groups of girls have equal status but are in competition and this will lead to prejudice. This is similar to the Eagles and the Rattlers in the “Robbers Cave” study.

The Headmistress needs to give the girls superordinate goals they can only achieve by cooperating rather than competing. She could give them the task of working together to organise the school prom.

Allport would say the girls need more contact with each other. If they mingle socially, Ashlinn and Bailee will get to know Lilo and lose their prejudices. This will happen because the Headmistress is an authority figure and supports it.

To get 4 marks for AO2, I’m making 4 clear and different applications of Realistic Conflict.

I’m giving 2 explanations for the girls’ row and 2 suggestions.

Because this isn’t a 8-mark or 12-mark essay, I don’t need a conclusion. Just the 4 points will do.

Lots of studies have been carried out into obedience and prejudice but (other than Milgram) you are expected to know about two in detail. One of them is the Classic Study – a piece of research from the heyday of Social Psychology that inspired other researchers who followed after. The other is a Contemporary Study – a piece of research from the 21<sup>st</sup> century that shows how Social Psychology is conducted today, with attention to ethical guidelines,

- The **Classic Study** is **Sherif (1954)**
- The **Contemporary Study** is **Burger (2009)**

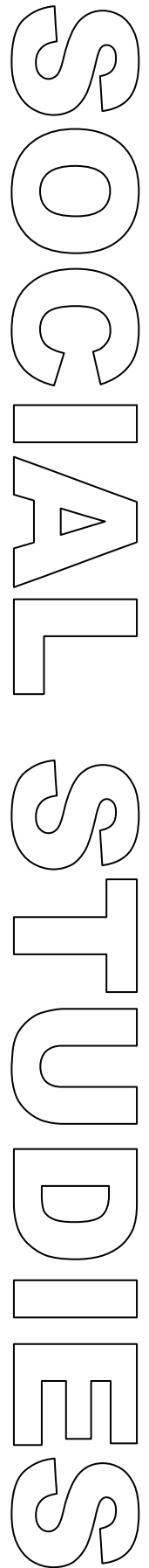
To show **Knowledge & Understanding (AO1)**, there is a code to help you, APRC:

1. **Aim:** what were the researchers trying to find out? It helps to think of the researchers having a general research question in mind as well as something very specific they were hoping this study would show
2. **Procedure:** how was the study carried out? This includes the sample and how they were recruited, the IV and DV and experimental design, the tasks that the participants had to complete and the experimental controls that were put in place as well as any special apparatus that was used
3. **Results:** what happened at the end of the study? This might involve scores or behaviours that were observed. It could be quantitative or qualitative data.
4. **Conclusions:** what did the researchers think the results meant? How did they explain what happened?

To show **Application (AO2)**, you should be able to explain how this study would be used in the real world.

To show **Analysis & Evaluation (AO3)**, you must discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the study. There is a code to help you remember how to do this: GRAVE

1. **Generalisability:** is the sample representative of ordinary people?
2. **Reliability:** were the procedures consistent and could they be replicated? Would you get the same results again?
3. **Application:** who could use the conclusions of this study and what would they do with them?
4. **Validity:** is this study really showing what it claims to show? Can its results be explained in other ways? This includes **ecological validity** which is how realistic or artificial the study is
5. **Ethics:** does this study follow ethical guidelines or are participants being mistreated in some way? Don't bother explain why the study *does* follow the guidelines: that's simply to be expected



## SOCIAL CLASSIC STUDY: SHERIF ET AL (1956) ROBBERS CAVE

### Context



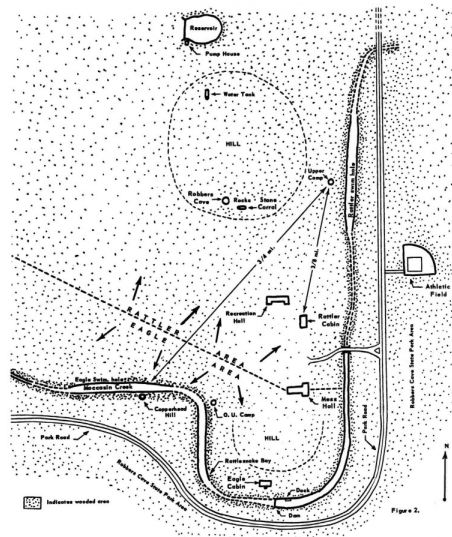
This study was carried out by **Muzafer Sherif** in the 1950s. It is an intergroup study, looking at what causes groups to change their behaviours when they come into contact with each other. The study explored Sherif's theory of **Realistic Conflict**, looking at what happens when groups are forced to compete and cooperate. Crucial to this theory is the idea that we divide people we meet into "**ingroup**" members with whom we share goals and values and "**outgroup**" members with whom we see ourselves in competition.

This study is significant for students in other ways:

- It shows how scientific research proceeds, because Sherif keeps changing the situation the boys are in and then studies how their behaviour alters in response to the change
- It illustrates features of the Social Approach, since it explores how situations dictate people's behaviour – it illustrates the old proverb "*tell me who your friends are and I'll tell you who you are*"
- It illustrates the power of the experimental method, manipulating an IV and drawing conclusions about cause and effect from differences in the DV
- It shows the importance of the field experiment, since it tests a group of boys in a realistic environment (a summer camp)

### The Robbers Cave Park

American summer holidays are very long and it is common for parents to send their children away to summer camp for several weeks. One of these camps was run by the Boy Scouts at Robbers Cave State Park in Oklahoma. Sherif took the opportunity to study a group of 22 11-year-old boys who spent 3 weeks at the camp in the summer of 1954. The boys stayed in log cabins alongside Moccasin Creek, where they could swim, and among woods they could explore.





Sherif conducted the study in three phases and each phase could be considered a condition of the IV, making the study a Repeated Measures Design because all the boys took part in every condition (they were stuck in the camp and couldn't go home).

- Sherif asked parents not to visit their sons, for the reason that it might "make them homesick". Really, he didn't want any extraneous variables

interfering. The boys had no idea they were being studied.

- Sherif chose the boys carefully. He picked boys who were all from white, Protestant families in Oklahoma because he didn't want any of them to be "outsiders". He screened out anyone with trouble at home. He picked boys who had been rated (by their teachers) as high in IQ. He split them into groups that were similar in sporting ability.

### Sherif's Experiment

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**Aim:** To find out what factors make two groups develop hostile relationships and then to see how this hostility can be reduced. Specifically, to see if two groups of boys can be manipulated into conflict and then conflict resolution by working together.

**IV:** The IV is the stage of the experiment: (1) ingroup formation, (2) friction phase and (3) integration phase

This is a Repeated Measures design.

**DV:** Intergroup behaviour was measured by observing the boys' behaviour and friendship patterns and tape recording their conversations and recording the phrases they used

**Sample:** 22 participants (11-year-old boys) who were split into two evenly-matched groups of 11 boys. The boys called themselves the "Rattlers" and the "Eagles"

**Procedure:** The boys arrived on separate buses and settled into their cabins on two sites. They were unaware of the other group, think

they were alone at the park. Each group had adult participant observers (camp counselors) who stayed with the boys for 12 hours a day. The observers did not influence the boys' decision making.

Ingroup Formation lasted a week. Each group of 11 had tasks to accomplish (eg a treasure hunt with a \$10 prize).

During this time the boys gave their groups names and discovered the existence of the other group. 2 boys from one of the groups left due to homesickness.

The friction phase involved a tournament between the two groups. This involved sports like baseball, tug-of-war and scavenger hunt but also experimental tests, like a bean-counting competition.

A trophy was promised for the winners along with prizes like knives and medals.



In the integration phase, Sherif tried to bring the two groups together. He tried “mere contact” by allowing the groups to have dinners and watch films together in the recreation hall. When this failed, he took a different approach, blocking the water pipe to the camp which forced the boys to work together to find the broken portion of pipe. Other tasks involved choosing films to watch together, cooperating to pull a (supposedly) broken-down truck and pitching tents with missing parts.

**Results:** Sherif found that the boys required little encouragement to be competitive. As soon as they found out about another group in the park, they resorted to “us-and-them” language and wanted a baseball match – so the boys themselves initiated that start of the friction phase.

In the friction phase, the two groups met for baseball and name-calling started immediately.

- The Eagles burned the Rattlers’ flag and the Rattlers retaliated by doing the same.
- After their second flag was destroyed, the Rattlers did a night raid on the Eagle’s cabins, stealing comics and overturning beds

- The Eagles launched their own raid, but brought bats with them for maximum destruction
- When the Eagles won the tournament, the Rattlers stole their prizes (medals and knives)

The two sides met for a fight, but the camp counsellors intervened and this

|  | Rattlers | Eagles |
|--|----------|--------|
| Outgroup friendships at end of friction phase    | 6.4%     | 7.7%   |
| Outgroup friendships at end of integration phase | 36.4%    | 23.2%  |

phase ended.

In the integration phase, the shared films and meals deteriorated into name-called and food-fights. The shared task fixing the water pipe produced cooperation, but another food fight followed. However, each shared task led to reduced hostility. By the end, the Rattlers shared \$5 they had won to buy soft drinks for everyone.

**Conclusions:** Sherif regards the study as proving his hypotheses about intergroup behaviour – especially Realistic Conflict Theory.

- The groups formed quickly, with hierarchies (“pecking orders”) and leaders, without any encouragement from the adults.
- When the groups meet in competitive situations, ingroup solidarity increases as does outgroup hostility.

- “Mere presence” by itself doesn’t reduce outgroup hostility.
  - Friction is reduced when the two groups are forced to cooperate, negotiate and share. Sherif calls this working towards “**superordinate goals**”
- An important conclusion from the study is that, although intergroup conflict is inevitable when competition is present, it *can* be reduced.

### How Many Studies?

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The classic Robbers Cave study was actually the *third* replication of the test. Sherif had carried out two earlier studies, in 1949 and 1953.

- In the first study, Sherif tried to restore harmony by giving the boys a “**common enemy**” to unite against. They did this by beating a softball team from outside the camp. However, Sherif noticed there were still hostilities between the Red Devils and the Bull Dogs.
- The second study was called off, “*owing to various difficulties and unfavorable conditions, including errors of judgment in the direction of the experiment,*” according to Sherif. **Frances Cherry (1995)** discovered that this was because the boys mutinied against the adults – perhaps because they realised they were being manipulated.

**Michael Billig (1976)** argued that Sherif’s studies really looked at three groups, not two, because the adult researchers were the third group that had most power and manipulated the other two. Billig didn’t know about the mutiny in the 2<sup>nd</sup> experiment, but his theory is backed up by it.

### Evaluating Sherif et al.

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#### Generalisability

22 boys is not a large sample. In a sample this small, any anomalies (boys with unusual characteristics, like violent bullies) will skew the results. However, Sherif went to lengths to screen the boys beforehand, removing any from troubled backgrounds or with antisocial character traits.

Only boys were used, so the results may not generalise the girls or mixed sex groups. Crucially, they were all children, so the results may not generalise to adults.

The boys were supposed to be “all American” types: white, bright and sporty. This wasn’t entirely

representative of young Americans back in the ‘50s and it certainly isn’t representative of America today, where whites make up 50% of school intake, with the other 50% being Hispanic, African American and Asian American.

#### Reliability

Since it involves observation, there are problems with reliability in this study. The observers were only with the boys for 12 hours a day and could not see or overhear everything that went on.

Despite this, Sherif took pains to make the study more reliable. He used a numbered scoring system for the boys’ friendship patterns, which

collected quantitative data. He also used multiple observers on occasions, creating inter-rater reliability. Where possible, he tape recorded the boys' conversations, so they could be played back and analysed later.

Certain aspects of this study could be replicated, such as the way the boys were selected and the bean-counting test along with the tournament and the prizes. Indeed, Sherif *had* replicated the study – twice!

However, other procedures were developed by Sherif “on the fly” as events developed (for example, the boys themselves requested the baseball match and Sherif had to intervene to prevent a fight). These things might happen differently if the study was replicated.

### Application

The study shows how competition and frustration creates hostility towards outgroups. In society, this suggests that discrimination and violence could be reduced if jobs, housing, education and other opportunities were shared more fairly between different groups, such as ethnic groups or social classes. This is the basis for a lot of Left Wing political thinking.

The study also shows that hostility can be reduced if groups are made to interact and work together towards common goals. It is not enough for them to be “mere presences” living alongside each other. This suggests ghettos should be discouraged and immigrants should be made to take up the host culture's language, education and pastimes. This is the basis for a lot of Right Wing political thinking.

### Validity

Sherif claimed that, by using several different research methods (observing, tape recording, tests, quantitative as well as qualitative data), he was making his study more valid.



The study has ecological validity, because these were real boys at a real summer camp, doing real activities. Even the specially created tasks (fixing the broken water pipe, pulling the truck) *seemed* real to the boys. There were some unrealistic features, such as the camp counsellors not intervening until the boys were actually ready to fight each other.

Although this is a field experiment, it lacked a Control Group. Sherif does not have a “normal” summer camp to compare his camp to. It may be perfectly normal for food fights and raids to happen in summer camps where the counsellors aren't imposing discipline. It may be normal for such boys to end up as friends after 3 weeks, regardless of whether they are given special tasks to carry out.

The outcomes of the two previous studies weaken the validity of Sherif's conclusions. It looks as though he kept trying the experiment until he got the results he was looking for. Billig (1976) suggests a completely different conclusion: that the Robbers Cave study shows how two groups behave

when they are manipulated by a more powerful third group.

### **Ethics**

The boys themselves did not give informed consent to be in this study and do not seem to have been debriefed afterwards – they never realised they were being experimented on. They were deceived in certain ways (about the broken water pipe being an accident, about the food truck breaking down).

However, the boys' parents were aware that this camp was a Social Psychology experiment and they *did* consent on their sons' behalf. However, they were asked not to visit the camp and check up on their sons,

so they couldn't be informed about everything that was going on.

The boys could withdraw from the study and in fact two of them did go home in the first week.

It's debateable whether the boys were harmed by this study. There were raids and food fights. One boy had his comics stolen. A fight with weapons very nearly broke out. However, these might be typical events in American summer camps, especially in the rough-and-ready culture of the 1950s (*knives* were used as prizes, which would never happen today). The boys seemed to enjoy themselves, which goes against the idea there was an ethical problem.

## **EXAM STYLE ANSWER**

### **Evaluate the Classic Study from social psychology. (8 marks)**

- A 8-mark "evaluate" question awards 4 marks for AO1 (Describe) and 4 marks for AO3 (Evaluate).

#### *Description*

Sherif studied 22 American boys at the Robbers Cave summer camp. They called themselves the Eagles and the Rattlers. A them-and-us mentality appeared when the groups met.

Sherif arranged a tournament and the competition led to name calling and night raids on each others' cabins. Sherif had to intervene to prevent a mass battle.

In the integration phase of the study, Sherif reduced hostility by getting the two groups to work together towards superordinate goals. For example, the boys had to use tug-of-war ropes to get a truck started.

The boys became friendly as a result of cooperating. Eagles' choices of friendships with Rattlers went up from 7.5% to 23.2%.

#### *Evaluation*

Sherif's study has high ecological validity. The boys were at a real summer camp and had no idea anything unusual was going on. Activities like pulling the truck seemed real to them.

To get 4 marks for AO1, I'm making 4 clear and different points about Sherif's study.

I'm writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each.

(I've made a point of including numbers to show I know *details* about the study)

Sherif's study is also valid because he used different methods, like observing and tape-recording the boys. He collected quantitative and qualitative data about their behaviour.

However, some parts of the study were unrealistic, like the bean-counting test, asking questions about their friendship choices and camp counsellors not imposing discipline.

Because the boys didn't realise they were in an experiment, this means they couldn't give informed consent. Sherif also deceived them (eg telling them the truck was broken when it wasn't really). However, the boys' parents knew about the study and agreed to it.

#### *Conclusion*

Sherif's study shows how intergroup hostility is created and how it can be reduced. It is strong evidence in favour of Realistic Conflict Theory and might help us reduce prejudice and discrimination in the real world.

To get 4 marks for AO3, I'm making 4 clear and different points about evaluation issues.

Again, I'm writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each.

To get into the top band (7-8 marks) I must remember to write a conclusion.

Notice that for a 8-mark answer you don't have to include *everything* Sherif did. I haven't mentioned the "friction" condition or the prizes in the tournament. I haven't mentioned the way Sherif screened the boys beforehand. I haven't described his conclusions.

But I have tried to make the two halves – Description and Evaluation – evenly balanced.

## SOCIAL CONTEMPORARY STUDY: BURGER (2009) REPLICATING MILGRAM

### Context



This study was carried out by **Jerry Burger**. It is a partial replication of the famous Milgram study, with alterations to make it more ethical and an IV to test the hypotheses in more detail. One of Milgram's variations was **Variation #5**, which included the idea of the learner having a "heart condition" in the script. In **Variation #17**, there is a second teacher (also a confederate), who encourages the main participant to stop. Burger incorporates both ideas into his study.

This study is significant for students in other ways:

- It shows how scientific research proceeds, because Burger is replicating parts of Milgram's study to see if the conclusions still hold true today (if not, they are "time locked").
- It illustrates features of the Social Approach, since it explores how situations dictate people's behaviour – but it also uses features of the Cognitive Approach, because it looks at the influence of personality too
- It illustrates the power of the experimental method, manipulating an IV and drawing conclusions about cause and effect from differences in the DV
- It shows the importance of experimental design, since it uses Independent Groups design

### Replicating Milgram

In the Milgram study, shocks went up to 450V and many participants became distressed in the later stage. Burger points out that in **Variation #5** all the participants who *did* rebel against authority dropped out by 150V; the 26 participants who were still obedient after 150V all went on to the end. 150V was the point where the heart condition was announced. This is the "**point of no return**". Burger argues there's no need to continue the experiment all the way to 450V: if participants are prepared to go

beyond 150V after learning about the heart condition, we can assume they would go all the way to 450V and spare them the distress.



Burger was also interested in cognitive factors that Milgram ignored. He focussed on two traits: **empathy** and **locus of control**. Empathy is the ability to put yourself in someone else's position. Would empathic individuals feel more sorry for the learner and want to stop sooner? Locus of control is the importance that autonomy and independence has for you. Would participants with a strong locus of control resent being ordered about and rebel?

- Burger is trying to make the study more ethical by not putting participants through (what he regards as) unnecessary distress. However, his assumption that

participants who would go to 165V would go all the way to 450V is a big assumption.

- Notice Burger's scientific approach. He has identified extraneous variables that might have influenced Milgram's original participants (empathy and locus of control) so in his experiment he puts in place Control. Burger measures these traits using questionnaires then checks at the end to see if there's a statistical link between scores in the traits and how many shocks the participants delivered.

### Burger's Experiment

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**Aim:** To find out if the same results as Milgram's 1963 study re-occur when the study is replicated with modern participants in 2009. Also, to see if personality variables like empathy and locus of control influence obedience. Finally, to see if the presence of a disobedient "model" makes a difference to obedience levels.

**IV:** The main IV is the base condition (same as Milgram, 1963) compared with the "rebellious partner" condition.

This is an Independent Groups design.

**DV:** Obedience is measured by how many volts the last shock to be delivered was, before the participant refused to go on, exhausted all the "prods" or reached 150V (whichever happened first)

**Sample:** 70 participants (a mixture of men and women) did the experiment, being randomly put into the two

conditions. They were recruited through newspaper ads and they were paid \$50 *before* the study started. They were aged 20-81.

Burger actually recruited a lot more participants but screened many of them out. He dropped volunteers who had heard of Milgram's original experiment, who had studied Psychology for 2+ years, who had anxiety issues or drug dependency.

**Procedure:** The procedure replicated Milgram's 1963 baseline study. The experimenter was a white man in his 30s; the confederate (learner) was in his 50s. The script resembled Milgram's but the test shock that the participant received was only 15V rather than Milgram's painful 45V. The participant/teacher watched the learner being strapped into the electric chair and then sat at the shock generator in an adjacent room. The teacher would read out 25 multiple



choice questions and the learner used a buzzer to indicate the answer. If the answer was wrong, the experimenter directed the learner to deliver a shock, starting at 15V and going up in 15V intervals.

The learner indicated they had a “slight heart condition” but the experimenter replied the shocks would not be harmful. At 75V the learner started making sounds of pain. At 150V the learner cried that they wanted to stop and complained about their heart condition.

If the teacher moved to deliver the 165V shock, the experimenter stopped the experiment.

In the “**model refusal**” condition, a second confederate pretended to be a second teacher. This teacher delivered the shocks, with the naïve participant watching. At 90V the confederate teacher turned to the naïve participant and said “I don’t know about this.” He refused to go on and the experimenter told the naïve participant to take over delivering the shocks.

**Results:** Burger found that 70% of participants in the baseline condition were prepared to go past 150V, compared to 82.5% in **Milgram’s Variation #5**. This sounds like a big difference but it is not statistically significant given the number of people involved.

| Behaviour                 | Base condition | Model Refusal | Milgram Variation #5 |
|---------------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Stopped at 150V or sooner | 12 (30%)       | 11 (36.7%)    | 7 (17.5%)            |
| Continuing past 150V      | 28 (70%)       | 19 (63.3%)    | 33 (82.5%)           |

Remember these results are being compared to Milgram’s Variation #5, not to Milgram’s original 1963 results. Variation #5 included the learner complaining about a heart condition

Burger also compared men and women but didn’t find a difference in obedience. Women were slightly less likely to obey in the “model refusal” condition but this was not statistically significant.

Empathy did not make a significant difference to obedience. However, in the base condition, those who stopped at 150V or sooner did have a significantly higher locus of control (but this was not the case in the “model refusal” condition).

**Conclusions:** Burger concludes that Milgram’s results still stand half a century later. People are still

influenced by situational factors to obey an authority figure, even if it goes against their moral values.

Burger makes the assumption that any participant who was willing to go beyond 150V would have been willing to go all the way to 450V the way Milgram’s participants did. He argues that their “self perception” would have made them do this. People like to see themselves as consistent; once they had made a decision to ignore the heart condition, they would not go back on that.

The “model refusal” results were not very different from the base condition.

This is odd because Social Impact Theory suggests the impact of the authority figure would be lessened if divided between two teachers rather than focused on one. Milgram found less obedience in this condition, but he used **two** rebellious models, not one.

Empathy didn't make a difference to obedience, which goes against what Milgram thought. However, locus of control did make a bit of a difference, suggesting some people resist the agentic state. However, this disappeared in the "model refusal" condition and Burger doesn't have an explanation for that.

## Evaluating Burger

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### Generalisability

Burger's sample of 70 people is larger than Milgram's sample of 40. It covers a wider age range (Milgram recruited 20-50 year olds, Burger 20-81 year olds) and two thirds of Burger's sample were women, whereas Milgram's were all male.

However, when you add up *all* Milgram's samples across *all* his Variations, there are much more than 70 and Milgram did test women in **Variation #8**.

Burger also excluded a lot of people from his final sample, for example people with emotional issues or some education in Psychology. This may have affected the results and Milgram used a wider range of *types* of people.

### Reliability

Milgram's original procedure is very reliable because it can be replicated. In 1974, Milgram published the results of his 19 Variations, which all replicated his baseline 1963 study. Burger is replicating aspects of Variation #5 (heart condition to test for empathy) and Variation #17 (model refusal) as well as Variation #8 (testing women). Burger followed Milgram's script wherever possible and used the same confederates every time.

By filming the whole thing, Burger adds to the inter-rater reliability because other people can view his participants' behaviour and judge obedience for themselves.

### Application

The study demonstrates how obedience to authority works and this can be used to increase obedience in settings like schools, workplaces and prisons. Authority figures should wear symbols of authority (uniforms) and justify their authority with reference to a "greater good".

Testing people for locus of control might identify those most likely to be disobedient – people with a strong need to be in control are less likely to take orders. Social Impact Theory suggests strategies for increasing the pressure on these people to be obedient.

### Validity

Milgram's study was criticised for lacking ecological validity because the task is artificial – in real life, teachers are not asked to deliver electric shocks to learners. This criticism still applies to Burger's study.

In other ways the study is valid. Because the participants were paid fully in advance, we can be fairly sure

it was social pressure that made them continue shocking, not a cost/benefit calculation about whether they personally would gain or lose money. Paying in advance is an experimental Control that Milgram didn't think of.

However, stopping the study at 150V may be invalid. Perhaps participants who were prepared to go to 165V would still have dropped out later. It is a huge assumption to say they would have continued to 450V. The "model refusal;" group, in particular, might have had second thoughts as the shocks got stronger.

### Ethics

Burger believes his study avoids the ethical problems of Milgram's original. Burger screened out participants who were likely to be distressed by the study and employed a trained clinical psychologist to help him do this.

The study was approved by the university Ethics Panel, who had the

power to shut it down if it looked like anyone was being harmed.

Burger reduced the test shock from a painful 45V to a mild 15V. He also stopped the study at 150V so he didn't force anyone to "go the distance" to 450V, which reduced many of Milgram's participants to tears (and three of them fainted).

Nonetheless, there are still ethical criticisms. Burger deceived his participants just as Milgram had done – the shocks weren't real, the learner's cries were a tape recording, the learner and second teacher were confederates. He did not get informed consent (as with Milgram, this was advertised as a memory study), although he did debrief participants afterwards. The BPS Ethical Guidelines say participants must not be distressed; even though no one was reduced to tears, the procedure was surely distressing for at least some participants.

## EXAM STYLE ANSWER

### Evaluate one contemporary study from social psychology. (8 marks)

- A 8-mark "evaluate" question awards 4 marks for AO1 (Describe) and 4 marks for AO3 (Evaluate).

#### Description

Burger replicated the Milgram study into obedience. In particular, he replicated variation #5 (testing empathy because the learner said he had a heart condition).

Burger also tested other variables, like whether a "model refuser" makes the participant more likely to disobey, whether women are more likely to disobey and whether personality affects the results.

Burger hired a clinical psychologist to test all the participants first and a lot were disqualified because they had emotional issues or they knew enough about psychology to recognise that this was a replication of the Milgram study.

Burger's version of the study only went up to 150V. If the

To get 4 marks for AO1, I'm making 4 clear and different points about Burger's study.

I'm writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each.

(I've made a point of including numbers to show I know details about the study)

participant started to deliver the 165V shock, the study ended right away.

### *Evaluation*

Burger's study has problems with ecological validity just like Milgram. Giving electric shocks to a learner is artificial and doesn't happen in real life. That means the study doesn't really tell us about why people obeyed the Nazis.

However, Burger did improve the validity by paying the participants \$50 in advance. This removes the confounding variable that some of them might have continued because they were worried they would lose the money (a cost/benefit analysis, not real obedience).

Burger's biggest problem is that he stopped the study at 150V and assumed that anyone who was prepared to go on would have gone to 450V. This might not be true, especially in the "model refusal" condition where participants might have backed out later.

However, Burger did this to make the study more ethical than Milgram. Delivering the higher shocks to a learner who seems to be dead was very distressing for Milgram's participants and Burger spared his participants having to do this.

### *Conclusion*

Burger did what was supposed to be impossible – replicating Milgram ethically. He settles the debate about whether you would get Milgram's same results in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – you would! However, he leaves a lot of questions, such as why empathy didn't make people stop and why the "model refuser" had so little impact.

To get 4 marks for AO3, I'm making 4 clear and different points about evaluation issues.

Again, I'm writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each.

(I've included some facts about the study here too but these are separate from the "description" above)

To get into the top band (7-8 marks) I must remember to write a conclusion.

Notice that for a 8-mark answer you don't have to include *everything* Burger did. I haven't mentioned the "model refusal" condition or the fact that the test shock was reduced to 15V. I haven't mentioned the test for locus of control. I haven't described Burger's results.

But I have tried to make the two halves – Description and Evaluation – evenly balanced.

The **Key Question** is a question about real life that Social Psychology might answer.

In the exam you might be *given* a Key Question to think about along with a short passage describing it. Or you might be *asked* about the Key Question *you* have researched as part of the Social Approach.

The Key Question presented here is:

**“How can knowledge of Social Psychology be used to reduce prejudice in situations such as crowd behaviour or rioting?”**

Any exam question on this is going to be assessing AO2 (Application).

- If you are asked to summarise, outline or describe your Key Question, then the Examiner want you to outline the key features of crowd behaviour and perhaps some of the famous examples of racism or riots. This is like general knowledge and you do not need to start using psychological terms or theories.
- If you are asked to use your knowledge of psychology to explain or answer the Key Question, this is where you will be applying theories of prejudice or the findings of famous studies to explain *why* crowds produces these behaviours or *how* the solutions might work.
- Keep these two requirements firmly in your mind. They may be asked separately (for example, as two 4-mark questions) or combined together (as a single 8-mark question)

You can use the information on the following pages to summarise your Key Question. There is more here than you need. You may like to choose one aspect of the Key Issue that interests you – such as the Ferguson unrest – and follow them up in more detail. Internet links are provided to help you.

# SOCIAL KEY QUESTION

**SOCIAL KEY QUESTION: HOW CAN PSYCHOLOGY HELP WITH PREJUDICE?**

Your suggested Key Question is:

**“How can knowledge of Social Psychology be used to reduce prejudice in situations such as crowd behaviour or rioting?”**

Remember it's a Key QUESTION. If the Examiner asks you what it is, don't write "Prejudice". "Prejudice" isn't a question. Questions have question marks at the end and start with a word like "how".

The exam may ask you to "summarise" your Key Question. This means giving some of the information below.

**The Features of Crowd Behaviour and Riots**

Crowd behaviour means how people behave differently when in large groups. It is also known as "mob mentality" or "herd mentality". It is believed to occur because people feel anonymous in crowds and lose their sense of identity.

Riots are when crowd behaviour involves lashing out at other people or property. Riots often express protest or a sense of grievance. The common types of riots include:

- **Police riot:** when the authorities use disproportionate force on civilians; this includes when the police attack peaceful protestors, causing them to fight back
- **Prison riot:** a concerted uprising by prisoners, either to express grievances or escape
- **Race riot:** a riot involving violence between two ethnic groups, usually a majority group attacking a minority
- **Sports riot:** a riot between fans of two teams, usually after a

close defeat and almost always in the winning team's city

- **Urban riot:** a riot in an inner city area, triggered by poor living conditions or unemployment

"Features" means facts about your Key Issue – what forms does it take, what types are there?

(You're not talking any Psychology here. It's general knowledge really)

Later you can explain the social psychology behind the formation of ingroups and outgroups.

Rioters often hide their identity with masks or scarves, but as more and more people join the riot, the risk of being identified goes down. This creates a "vicious circle" and the riot spreads. Riots are often contained when the police are present in enough numbers to increase the risk of being arrested again.

## Racist Chelsea Fans

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In February 2015, Chelsea fans attended a match in Paris against the French team Paris Saint-Germain. Before the match, there was a racist incident on the Paris Métro.

**Souleymane Sylla** was repeatedly and violently pushed off the carriage as he tried to board the train. The fans on the train blocked the door, made aggressive and insulting hand gestures and chanted, *"We're racist, we're racist and that's the way we like it"* and *"John Terry is racist and that's the way we like it."* Chelsea captain John Terry had been cleared of racially abusing another player in 2013. The incident was filmed on a mobile phone by a passerby and also captured on CCTV.

Four fans were later identified, arrested and banned from attending football matches for 5 years. One of them lost his job as an accountant because of his involvement.

Back in England, Chelsea fans raised money for Mr Sylla to come to London and watch a match. Chelsea FC stated: *"We certainly hope he'll take us up on it so he can meet real Chelsea fans and experience the true spirit of the club."*

The incident is captured on video

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-33622106>

Describing this incident would be good if you can go on to explain the social psychology behind it and the Club's response.



## Ferguson Riots

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In August 2014, an African-American youth, Michael Brown, was fatally shot by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri. Although Brown had allegedly been involved in a robbery, many people felt that the US police were too willing to use force against African American suspects.

A shrine of flowers was set up and a peaceful protest gathered. Tensions

increased when a police dog urinated on the flowers and a police vehicle crushed the shrine. 150 riot police arrived with tear gas but the rioters destroyed a dozen businesses and set two on fire.

Riots continued for the rest of the week. Many people complained that the police used military-style tactics against the crowds, some of whom



claimed to be using their right to protest. Eventually, an African-American police chief Ron Howard was put in charge. Howard marched alongside protesters in a peaceful gathering.

This BBC video reports on peaceful protests in Ferguson

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QvaAX3D0Tds>

This video shows tear gas being used against crowds when the verdict was released:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZxyOTLlbIsM>

At the funeral of Michael Brown, the family called for calm. Violence started up again when the prison officer who shot Brown was acquitted by a court and again on the anniversary of the shooting.

According to *The Washington Post*, Ferguson is a community where two-thirds of the population are black, but in the Ferguson Police Department 48 of the 53 officers are white.

It was reported in court that Ferguson police were “twice as likely to arrest African Americans during traffic stops as they were whites” and this had created suspicion and hostility towards the police.





## Applying Psychology to the Key Question

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Any question on your Key Question will be assessing you on AO2 (Application of Concepts and Ideas) so as well as telling the Examiner *about* prejudice and how it can be tackled, you need to explain the psychology *behind* these ideas.

You might get a question in two parts: one part asking you to summarise your Key Quest and then another part asking you to use your psychological knowledge (the “apply” command from AO2).

Or you might get one question which asks you to explain and apply psychology to your Key Question: in this case, it’s a good idea to write the answer in two “halves”, getting all the explanation out of the way then dealing with the AO2 application.

### Features

“Mob mentality” can be explained by Social Identity Theory. When people join a large crowd, they change their social identity because they start to see the crowd as their new ingroup and everyone else as an outgroup. This makes them less respectful of property and the law, because these are viewed as outgroup products.

A different explanation might be Realistic Conflict Theory, because the crowd might really be in competition of scarce resources with another group. This is more likely in a race riot or an urban riot.

Another explanation might be Agency Theory, because there may be authority figures organising the crowd. There might be symbols of authority, like placards and slogans. The crowd might feel moral strain about using violence, but by entering an Agentic State, they feel the organisers are responsible, not them.

Social Impact Theory would explain why the police lose control over a riot when the numbers get too large because of division of impact. If the police increase their presence, this restores their social impact.

### Chelsea Fans

The Chelsea fans saw themselves as an ingroup. Social identification meant they all joined in the chanting. Social comparison meant they saw Mr Sylla as an outgroup member, partly because he was French and their team was playing a French team but also because he was black and they were all white.

Agency Theory might also explain the racist behaviour, because Chelsea captain John Terry was perceived (by these fans) to have racist views. If the fans were in an Agentic State, they might have behaved in a racist way in obedience to John Terry.

Four fans were singled out as ringleaders and arrested. Social Impact Theory would explain how these men might have influenced the rest. In a crowded subway train, they would have been very close to each other and had a lot of social impact on the fans surrounding them. As fellow fans, they would have had what French & Raven call “referent power”.

By inviting Mr Sylla to a Chelsea match, home fans are trying to bring him into their ingroup. This will make Mr Sylla feel less hurt and angry, because he will no longer see Chelsea

fans or the English as an outgroup. It may also lessen racism in future, because the fans will see Black French people like Mr Sylla as “Chelsea fans” too and part of their ingroup.

### **Ferguson**

This was both a police riot and a race riot. The black community of Ferguson sees the white Ferguson PD as an outgroup and the police officers see the black community the same way. Social comparison means they will interpret each other’s behaviour in the worst way: the crowds will see the destruction of the shrine as a deliberate insult (it may have been accidental) and the police will see the protesting as criminal behaviour (it may have been peaceful).

There is also an explanation from Realistic Conflict Theory, because the black community is poor but numerous, whereas the white community is wealthy but has the police on its side. The two groups are in competition for control of Ferguson.

Duckitt’s theory of “domination of the outgroup by the ingroup” applies here, because many commentators (including President Obama) criticised the police. This justified the protesters in what they were doing and explains why a new police officer was put in charge.

When Ron Johnson marched alongside the protesters, he was joining their ingroup and making his police seem less of an outgroup. This made him more of an authority figure for the crowds, giving him what French & Raven call referent power as well as legitimate power and coercive power.

If the Ferguson PD can recruit more African American officers, the black community may see them as less of an outgroup with more referent power. However, Realistic Conflict Theory would say this unrest won’t stop until the competition between different ethnic groups in America is reduced.

|                          |
|--------------------------|
| <b>EXAM STYLE ANSWER</b> |
|--------------------------|

**Summarise the key question you have studied from Social Psychology, using your knowledge of memory. (8 marks)**

- *A 8-mark “evaluate” question awards 4 marks for summarising and 4 marks for AO2 (Apply).*

#### *The Key Question*

My Key Question was “How can Social Psychology be used to reduce prejudice in situations such as crowd behaviour or rioting?”

### Summary

Crowd behaviour or “mob mentality” occurs when people behave differently in large groups. It can lead to violence and vandalism. This is called rioting.

One example of crowd behaviour is the racist incident involving Chelsea fans in the Paris subway in 2015. The fans refused to let Mr Sylla board a train and chanted racist chants.

Chelsea FC apologised to Mr Sylla. Other fans raised money for him to come to London and see “*the true spirit of the club.*” The four ringleaders were banned from matches.

An example of rioting would be the Ferguson riots of 2014. When Michael Brown was shot by a white police officer, there was a protest about racist police tactics that turned into a riot that lasted for days.

### Application

Social Identity Theory explains crowd behaviour because the people see the crowd as their ingroup but anyone else is viewed as an outgroup and shown less respect, which may lead to vandalism or violence.

The Chelsea fans saw Mr Sylla as an outgroup because he was French and black. Social Identification meant they joined in chanting together and Social Comparison meant they pushed him off the train.

By inviting Mr Sylla to London, Chelsea fans are including him in their ingroup. This might make him feel better about them and reduce racist incidents in future.

The Ferguson riots might be because of the racial composition of the Ferguson PD, which is mostly white, whereas Ferguson is mostly black. This leads each group to treat the other badly, which is why the police overreacted and the crowd turned violent.

### Conclusion

SIT suggests we can reduce prejudice by encouraging people to view others as members of their ingroup. However, Realistic Conflict Theory would say the Ferguson unrest won't stop so long as African Americans have less access to resources like wealth or jobs or protection by the law.

To get 4 marks for AO1, I'm making 4 clear and different points about prejudice.

I've referred to 3 topics here, but I could have referred to just one in detail.

To get 4 marks for AO3, I'm making 4 clear and different points about evaluation issues.

Again, I'm writing 4 paragraphs, hoping to get a point for each.

I could have written more about 2 or 3 points, rather than 4 different points.

(I've started each point off with “X can be applied to Y”)

To get into the top band (7-8 marks) I must remember to write a conclusion.

Notice that for a 8-mark answer you don't have to include *everything* about crowd behaviour. I haven't mentioned the other types of riots or the precise details of the Ferguson unrest. I haven't mentioned the examples of Chelsea chanting or John Terry as Chelsea Captain. I haven't described any theories of obedience.

But I have tried to make the two halves – Summary and Application – evenly balanced.