

REICHER & HASLAM (2006)

'RETHINKING THE PSYCHOLOGY OF TYRANNY: THE BBC PRISON STUDY'

TOPICS TO LEARN ABOUT:

1. Psychology of Tyranny
2. Social Influence Theories:

'Mob psychology' - Le Bon

'Deindividuation' - Festinger et al

3. Zimbardo: The Stanford Prison Experiment
4. Social Identity Approach; Reicher & Haslam



PSYCHOLOGY OF TYRANNY

- **REICHER & HASLAM**: Aim to understand issues & events in history:

Holocaust; extermination of 6 million jews

Today.....



Tyranny: cruelty & injustice in exercising power or authority over others.

- Shift from **individual** explanations to **situational** explanations for tyrannical acts
- Influence of **ROLES**; people adopt roles (eg; doctor, policewoman, teacher, prisoner, guard, etc.). Often role strengthened by uniforms.

• SOCIAL INFLUENCE THEORIES

- Le Bon (1895); MOB PSYCHOLOGY

Crowds behave in primitive & irrational way. Concept of 'social contagion'. EG:.....?

WHY? Crowd lose sense of moral responsibility

- Festinger et al, (1952); concept of 'deindividuation' - a mental state where you no longer feel that you are an individual but instead follow the groups values, etc. (loss of personal identity)

- Zimbardo (1969); combines two ideas of mob psychology and deindividuation; people in crowds no longer autonomous.

Anonymity of uniforms increases chance of violence and extreme behaviour.

• STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT: Haney, Banks & Zimbardo (1973) (see sheet)

Mock prison in basement of Stanford University

24 male college students randomly divided into prisoners & guards.

Uniforms issued to both groups



Results: Terminated after 6 days due to extreme behaviours; guards sadistic & humiliating treatment of prisoners/ prisoners passive & depressed.

Zimbardo's conclusion; process of deindividuation, crowd membership, and role of uniforms = 'pathology of power'.

Situational explanation for man's inhumanity to man.

<p>Guard's uniform</p>	<p>Role / rules</p>
<p>Khaki shirt and trousers Whistle Police night stick (wooden baton) Mirror sunglasses</p>	<p>'To maintain the reasonable degree of order within the prison necessary for its effective functioning' Worked 8 hour shifts and went home after each shift</p>
<p>Prisoner's uniform</p>	<p>Role / Rules</p>
<p>Loose-fitting smock with number on front and back No underwear Light chain and lock around ankle Rubber sandals Nylon stocking cap</p>	<p>Referred to only by number Allowed 3 supervised toilet visits per day 2 hours 'privileges' 2 visits per week Work assignments 'Count' at start of each guard shift</p>

SOCIAL IDENTITY APPROACH: an alternative to Zimbardo's 'Roles' explanation

- Criticisms of Zimbardo's study;
- - **Unethical**; difficult to replicate & challenge
- - **Deterministic**; individual differences in behaviour
- - **Demand characteristics & Experimenter effects**

- **Social Identity Theory**; Tajfel & Turner (1979):
Social identity tied in with group membership (eg;....?)
 - * What groups do you belong to....?
 - Position group holds in society determines self-esteem & tendency for ethnocentrism ('ingroups favouritism-& out-groups discrimination)
 - * Groups can act negatively or positively

SOCIAL IDENTITY APPROACH (continued)

- **Self- categorisation theory** (Turner, 1985):
- Importance of group membership to individual will determine how far they will act for benefit of group.
- Groups can act to change inequalities between groups
- Concept of **dominant** groups (+vely valued), and **subordinate** groups (-vely valued).
- **Subordinate** groups will resist inequality between groups depending on;
- **Permeability** of group boundaries; belief a person has about ability to advance through social system despite group membership.
- **Security**: refers to perceived fairness of group inequalities & perceived stability of groups.
- Thus, if situation is unfair & unstable = challenge.