

Social Psychology

Reicher and Haslam 2006

⌘ *The BBC Prison Experiment*



Social Psychology



- ⌘ Reicher and Haslam are 'Social Psychologists' presently at Exeter University.
- ⌘ Social psychologists look at how the **social situation** affects our behaviour rather than genetic or biological factors.

Personality Types

- ⌘ What type of person might become a traffic warden?
- ⌘ List all the personal characteristics!



The Dispositional Hypothesis

- ❖ Riots in prisons were rife in the 60's and 70's.
- ❖ These problems were thought to be due to the 'NATURE' of the type of people who became guards and the type of people who are prisoners



The Situational Hypothesis

⌘ However, Some say it is the ***social situation*** which has the strongest influence on behaviour.

⌘ Society establishes ***roles and social norms*** which direct and inform our behaviour



Milgram and obedience

⌘ You have already seen how normal people appear to be more obedient when in situations of authority than we might believe!



Zimbardo tested the **dispositional hypothesis** in his famous **Stanford Prison Experiment**



Zimbardo's findings

- ⌘ **Social roles** have a much more powerful influence over our behaviour than we tend to believe
- ⌘ Photo from Abu Graib Prison where some say the social situation which caused the abuse and not the disposition of the soldiers.
- ⌘ <http://pennarini.dnsdojo.com/web/saturnd/FLV/5steptyranny.wmv>



Zimbardo and Deindividuation

Zimbardo also said 'group identity' can take over our individual identity and we may then lose our sense of personal responsibility. This process is called:

'deindividuation'



Groups and social identity

⌘ Social Identity Theory (Tajfel 1978) says groups are an important part of our identity!



So what makes some groups bad?

⌘ What makes some groups turn against other groups?



Social Identity Theory

- ⌘ Predicts that groups that break down or rebel against other groups may have:
 1. Poor or no leadership
 2. No **fairness** in group/society, and no way to improve your status in the group/society – this called '**legitimacy**'
 3. No '**permeability**' in the group. Cannot move up in the system and resources are unequal.
 4. Whether we feel positively valued by the group/society

Leadership styles affect group behaviour:

1. **Authoritarian leaders** – who order people how to behave – leads to obedience but also to aggression.



Core Study : Reicher and Haslam (2006)



⌘ Aimed to look how **groups** behave when they are *unequal* in terms of power, status and resources. They also observed different styles of leadership.



Method: An *experimental case study* in collaboration with the BBC



- ⌘ It was an **experiment** as the researchers were manipulating the situation (there were **independent variables I.V's**)
- ⌘ It was a **case study** as one group of people were being observed in depth over a period of time.

The Independent Variables

⌘ 1. Permeability

⌘ 2. Legitimacy

⌘ 3. Cognitive
Alternatives.
(all based on
'social identity
theory')



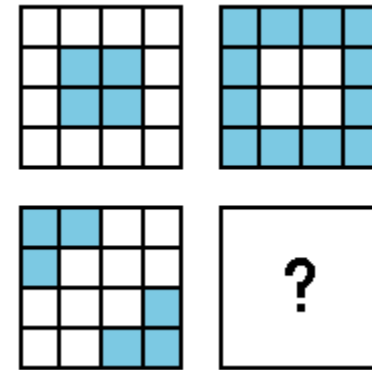
Participants



- ⌘ 332 Male volunteers - newspaper ads
- ⌘ 27 selected using *psychometric tests*,
- ⌘ 15 chosen for range of age, social class, ethnicity.
- ⌘ Divided into 5 groups of 3 matched for personality.
- ⌘ 1 was randomly selected to be a guard and the other two to be prisoners.

Psychometric Tests

⌘ Any test which measures aspects of personality, emotions, intelligence etc.



⌘ Often criticised for lacking **validity**! Does an IQ tests really measure how intelligent you are?



How did they ensure the study was ethical?



1. Passed BPS ethics committee
2. Medical backgrounds checked
3. Consent obtained
4. Monitored by clinical psychologists
5. Paramedic always on duty
6. Security guards present
7. Monitored by ethics committee who could stop experiment at any time

How did they measure behaviour?

1. Video / audio recordings
2. Daily psychometric tests (for depression, self esteem, compliance with rules and for group identification)



3. Cortisol levels (urine & saliva) to measure stress



Guard Initiation



- ⌘ Told *selected* as guards
- ⌘ Shown timetables told only run prison smoothly
- ⌘ Told draw up rules and punishments
- ⌘ Told no physical violence allowed

Guard situation

- ⌘ Superior accommodation
- ⌘ Better quality uniform
- ⌘ Superior meals
- ⌘ Keys to all doors and punishment cell, access to all areas



Prisoner situation

- ⌘ 3 man cells
- ⌘ Hair shaved on arrival
- ⌘ Uniform of T shirt with 3 digit number and loose trousers and sandals
- ⌘ Arrived **one at a time**
- ⌘ Told **nothing** accept no violence allowed
- ⌘ List of rules and rights posted on wall



Manipulation of the variables

– permeability:

⌘ Prisoners and guards told selection tests not perfect so guards can identify prisoners who show 'guard like' qualities as promotion would be possible from prisoner to guard on day 3.



Manipulation of variables – legitimacy - fairness

- ⌘ 3 days after the promotion – told allocation to roles had been random, but too late to make changes.
- ⌘ Division of groups – lack of legitimacy.



Manipulation of the variables:

Cognitive Alternatives



⌘ Leaderships Styles

- ⌘ On the 4th day a new prisoner was introduced, selected because of his trade union experience at negotiation.
- ⌘ It was expected he would provide leadership skills.
- ⌘ He suggested negotiating with rather than just confronting or intimidating the guards. He was withdrawn the next day to stop him influencing the behaviour any further (the prisoners were told he was ill!).

Results Phase One



- ⌘ Guards did not develop a group identity, take on a power role or identify normal patterns of working. As individuals they appeared not to want to be seen as authoritarian! They disagreed about how to manage their role.
- ⌘ For first three days prisoners acted as individuals all intent on showing qualities aimed at getting promotion. Although generally prisoners were a more cohesive group than the guards.



- ⌘ After one prisoner was promoted the prisoners formed a tighter group, challenging the guards and collapsing the system

Results Phase Two



- ⌘ Day 6 cell break out occurred and prisoners occupied the guards quarters
- ⌘ Prisoners and guards decided to work together as a commune although the prisoners who had led the challenges were less co operative
- ⌘ By the end of the study some were trying to impose harsher systems of inequality on other members of the group.
- ⌘ On day 8 the study had to be stopped as the systems needed to impose control would have become unethical.

Conclusions



- ⌘ That how groups work depends on far more than just taking on a social role.
- ⌘ Failing groups may promote tyranny !
- ⌘ When people are unable to create a social system for themselves they are more likely to accept extreme solutions proposed by others.

Reicher and Haslam's Research Questions:

1. Will the participants accept their roles uncritically?

- ✓ Only at first when they thought the roles were legitimate and permeable!

2. Will those given power abuse it?

- ✓ Not in the way that was expected. In fact those that were denied power and who felt this was not legitimate ended up taking power. Those with power were reluctant to use it.

3. Will those with no power accept their position without complaint?

- ✓ To begin with they did, when they thought the rules were fair and there was permeability, but after that the prisoners rebelled.

Problems with the Reicher Study

- ⌘ **Psychometric testing** (validity)
- ⌘ **Ecological validity** – would guards behave so passively in a real life situation?
- ⌘ **Demand characteristics** – participants appeared to know about previous psychological research and the guards were wary of being seen as authoritarian and taking power so may have acted deliberately not to be seen as aggressive! Prisoners may have seen the research as more of a game than you would as a real prisoner as they knew there were no real sanctions!
- ⌘ **Qualitative nature of much data** may have led to observer / researcher bias
- ⌘ **Generalisability** of subjects to wider population (type and gender)
- ⌘ **Ethics** – consent was not 100% informed, there was still potential for harm, there was no confidentiality.

Usefulness



- ⌘ The study does shed more light on why terrible circumstances often appear to happen in situations where there is a collapse of power and shows how authoritarian individuals, given the right social situation (such as the collapse of power) can be promoted to leadership roles.
- ⌘ This appears to reflect what happened with the election to power of Hitler and then the following obedience and aggression shown in the holocaust.
- ⌘ It enables us to notice this effect in societies with poor or authoritarian leadership and perhaps predict where violence might break out in future.

There will be section a) and section b) style questions to answer in the examination

- ⌘ **There will be shorter answer questions in section a) such as:**
- ⌘ Explain what Reicher and Haslam meant by legitimacy and permeability (4)

- ⌘ **In section b) there will be longer questions such as:**
- ⌘ Social psychologists are interested in how the social situation affects our behaviour.
- ⌘ 1. Using the following studies explain what each study tells us about the affects of the social situation on our behaviour (10)
 - ⌘ Milgram
 - ⌘ Reicher and Haslam
 - ⌘ Piliavin
- ⌘ 2. Explain what problems social psychologists have when investigating social behaviour (12)
- ⌘ 3. Choosing one study suggest one alternative method of investigating the behaviour and say how you think this might have affected the results.

Section b question (Came up in May 09)

- ⌘ Psychologists are often accused of being unethical.
- ⌘ 1. Using the studies listed below explain which ethical guidelines were broken (6)
 - ⌘ Milgram
 - ⌘ Reicher and Haslam
 - ⌘ Piliavin
- ⌘ 2. Briefly discuss two strengths and two weaknesses of psychologists breaking ethical guidelines (12)
- ⌘ 3. Choosing one study, explain one other way in which the psychologists could have investigated the behaviour without breaking ethical guidelines and say how you think this would have affected the data gathered in this study (8)