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**PEACE AND CONFLICT STUDIES  
STANDARD LEVEL  
PAPER 1**

**SCHOOL BASED SYLLABUS**

Monday 30 April 2012 (morning)

1 hour 15 minutes

**SOURCE BOOKLET**

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INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Do not open this Source Booklet until instructed to do so.
- Use the sources to answer the questions in Paper 1.

## SOURCE A

### People “still willing to torture”

**Decades after a notorious experiment, scientists have found test subjects are still willing to inflict pain on others – if told to by an authority figure.**

5 US researchers repeated the famous “Milgram test”, with volunteers told to deliver electrical shocks to another volunteer – played by an actor. Even after faked screams of pain, 70% were prepared to increase the voltage, the study found. Both may help explain why apparently ordinary people can commit atrocities.

10 Dr Jerry Burger, of Santa Clara University, used a similar format to Stanley Milgram’s original study although he did not allow the volunteers to carry on beyond 150 volts after they had shown their willingness to do so, suggesting that the distress caused to the original volunteers had been too great. Again, however, the vast majority of the 29 men and 41 women taking part were willing to push the button knowing it would cause pain to another human. Even when another actor entered the room and questioned what was happening; most were still prepared to continue. He said: “What we found is validation of the same argument – if you put people in certain situations, they will act in surprising and maybe often even disturbing ways.” He said that it was not that there was “something wrong”  
15 with the volunteers, but that when placed under pressure, people will often do “unsettling” things.

20 Dr Abigail San, a clinical psychologist, has recently replicated the experiment for a soon-to-be-aired BBC documentary – all the way up to the 450-volt mark, again finding a similar outcome to Professor Milgram. “It’s not that these people are simply not good people any more – there is a massive social influence going on.” She said that the volunteers were being asked to carry out a complex task in aid of scientific research, and became entirely focused on it, with “little room” left for considering the plight of the person receiving the shock. “They tend to identify massively with the ‘experimenter’, and become very engaged and distracted by the research. There’s no opportunity for them to say ‘What’s my moral stand on this?’”.

[Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk> (19 December 2008)]

**SOURCE B**

**Stanley Milgram on his major findings**

5 The most fundamental lesson of our obedience study is that ordinary people simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process. A substantial proportion of people do what they are told to do, irrespective of the content of the act and without limitations of conscience, so long as they perceive that the command comes from a legitimate authority.

[Source: R Gross, *Psychology: The Science of Mind and Behavior* (2004)]

## SOURCE C

### **Is it human nature to conform?**

**Would you electrocute someone if an authority figure told you to do so? Or give a response you know to be wrong if others in your group said it was right? For more people than you might think, the answer could be yes.**

5 It's this idea of conformity that the American social psychologist Solomon Asch studied in the 1950s, using nothing more complex than straight black lines drawn on pieces of card. It's one of the classic experiments in psychology, and Asch showed that many of us would rather deny the evidence of our own eyes than stand out from the group. Asch believed in individual integrity and, at a time when social psychology was focusing on conformity to explain the Holocaust, he designed an experiment to prove that people would stand up against group pressure.

10 His unwitting subjects were unaware that the rest of the group were stooges or plants, who had been instructed to say that one line was the same length as another – even though it patently wasn't. Contrary to his expectations, Asch found that a third of people went along with the group, even when it contradicted the evidence of their own eyes. But Asch found a way of explaining his results which tallied with his positive view of human nature: going along with your peers and acknowledging their  
15 views is a fundamentally social behaviour, without which society would collapse.

### **Abdicate responsibility**

One of his students, Stanley Milgram, was profoundly influenced by Asch's work. If a third of people capitulated to peer pressure in this way, Milgram wondered what would happen if the pressure came from an authority figure. In 1963 he conducted his infamous electric shock experiment,  
20 in which he led people to believe that they were giving someone electric shocks when they made mistakes on a word task. Still less so, Philip Zimbardo's controversial Stanford Prison experiment in 1971, where assuming the uniform and the role of guards in a fake prison led students to inflict a regime of brutality on their fellow students who were playing the prisoners. Whereas in Milgram's experiment the subjects passed responsibility to the authority figure, in Zimbardo's they assumed  
25 authority themselves.

Although a long way from the black lines on a piece of card to which they can trace their genesis, both experiments have been used to explain the shocking change in behaviour of apparently ordinary people when employed in Nazi death camps. But perhaps the key, even there, was simply an unwillingness to stand out from the crowd, even if it meant denying what was seen.

[Source: Marya Burgess, BBC Radio 4 (January 2010)]

## SOURCE D

### **Milgram Revisited: Does “obedience to authority” explain cruelty?**

As a psychologist, I have always been bothered by Milgram’s conclusion that we are all capable of blindly submitting to authority. Particularly disturbing in Milgram’s experiment was that the “authority” was a lab technician. What kind of authority is that? The experimenter giving the orders was not a powerful or threatening figure by any reasonable definition – surely nothing comparable to a German SS officer or CIA agent.

In Nazi Germany some ordinary citizens were willing participants in torture and murder, others were blindly obedient to oppressive authority and still others were fearful that if they didn’t participate they and their families would be punished despite assurances to the contrary. But these compelling factors for obedience or submission were not present in Milgram’s experiment. If Milgram’s subjects bowed to the measly “authority” of a lab technician on a college campus wouldn’t that imply even greater depravity than for those who capitulate to genuine powerful authorities? That is a difficult and painful conclusion.

Still, though, I could not put my finger on what was wrong with Milgram’s research. After all, his subjects followed orders and were willing to inflict pain. And the recent replication, as well as numerous previous ones, said the same. But then it struck me.

Replication of the experiment is not enough. What is needed is replication and then follow-up with the same subjects (although that would pose difficult research challenges). While many of the participants in their brief face-off with authority and obedience may have appeared to be following orders blindly, their initial responses are not the litmus test. If it were true obedience, as in the Nazi Germany analogy, it should stand up in a repetition with the same subjects. In other words, after reflection would those who capitulated to “authority” do it again? I think it’s likely that many would not. Milgram noted that most of his subjects had high stress levels following the experiment.

In Nazi Germany obedience was not a one-shot deal of participating in cruelty for an hour, being debriefed and then going home to a normal life.

Simply replicating Milgram’s research design does not tell us if the obedience that was demonstrated is a fixed part of our makeup, even if dormant most of the time. On the other hand, all of us may not be monsters poised for the right circumstances to unleash the devil within. The implications of Milgram’s experiment are too far reaching to be left standing without more thorough investigation.

[Source: adapted from psychologist Dr Bernard Starr’s online blog (6 January 2009)]