



Genocide And Intergroup Conflict

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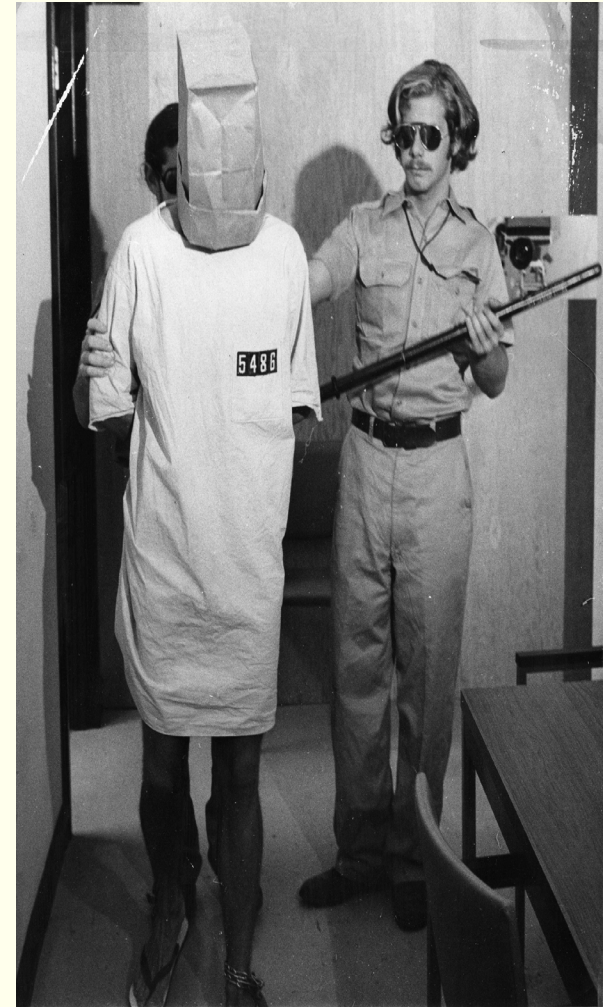
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The trouble with Eichmann was precisely that so many were like him, and that the many were neither perverted nor sadistic, that they were, and still are, terribly and terrifyingly normal. From the viewpoint of our legal institutions and of our moral standards of judgment, this normality was much more terrifying than all the atrocities put together.

— *Hannah Arendt* —



Baum's Eight Stages of Genocide Formation (Antecedents)

Stage	Heading	Brief Explanation
1	Classification	All cultures categorise into 'us' and 'them' based upon some form of classification
2	Symbolisation	Cultures use names and physical symbols to identify members of groups
3	Dehumanisation	Denial of humanity to the stigmatised group
4	Organisation	Organisation by government, militia, or some form of group – not individual or ad hoc
5	Polarisation	Extremists drive groups apart
6	Identification	Potential victims are identified and separated from other groups based on their identity
7	Extermination	Killing of group members takes place ('extermination' because victims are not human [see 'Dehumanisation'])
8	Denial	Mass graves, destruction of evidence



"The ideal subject
of totalitarian rule
is not the convinced Nazi
or the dedicated communist,
but people for whom
the distinction between
fact and fiction, true
and false, no longer exists."

- Hannah Arendt, "The Origins
of Totalitarianism" (1951)

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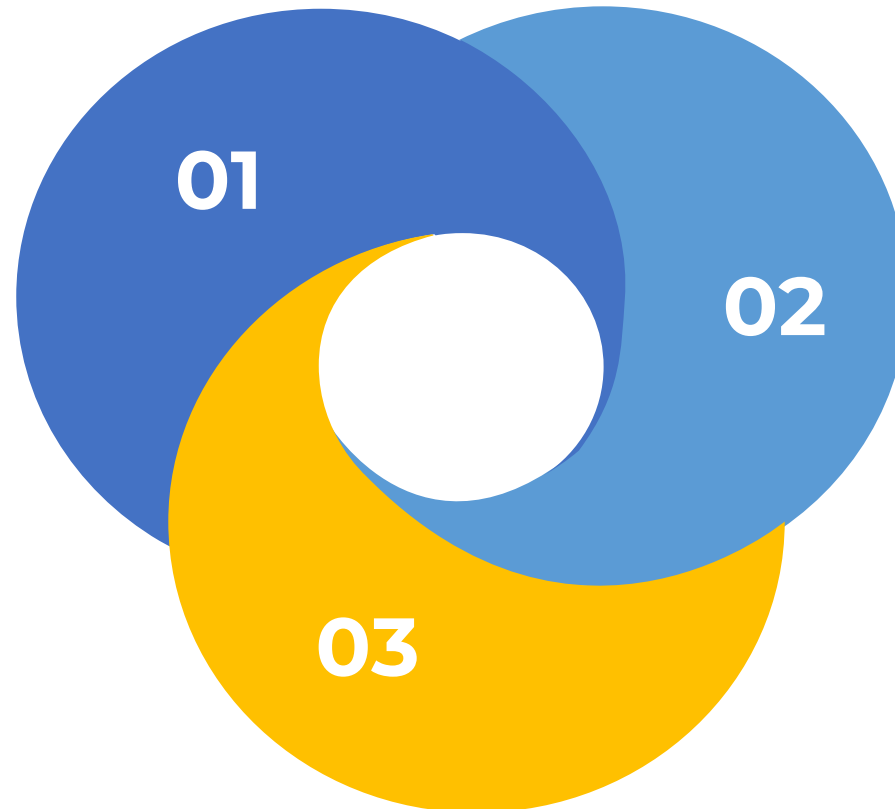
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Potential Psychological Explanations: Conformity and Obedience

Milgram's Obedience Studies

Participants were instructed to administer electric shocks to an unseen learner



Remarkably high level of obedience displayed even when shocks reached potentially lethal levels

Revealed the powerful impact of societal norms and authority figures on shaping individual conduct

Social Influence and Conformity

- 01** Authority figures hold significant influence over individuals
- 02** Society establishes norms that dictate acceptable behaviors
- 03** Individuals often conform to these norms to gain social approval and avoid disapproval



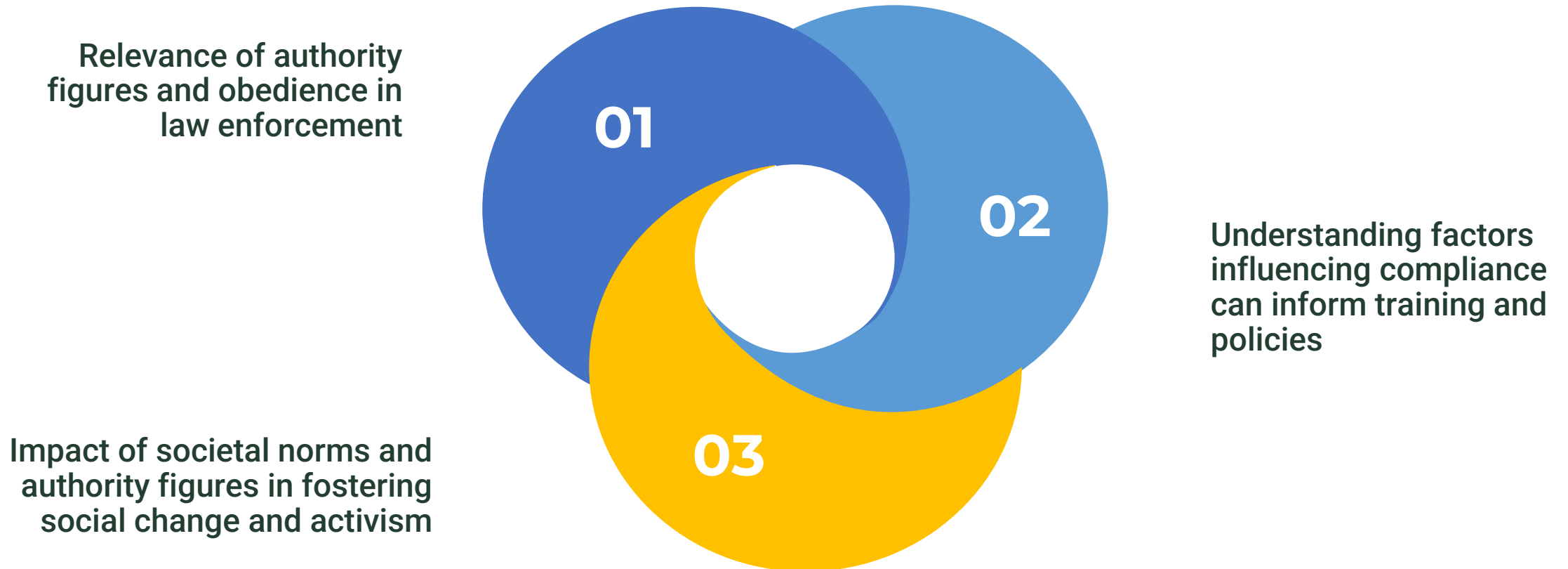
Factors Influencing Obedience

- Physical proximity and legitimacy of authority influence level of obedience
- Gradual commitment to escalating situations increases likelihood of obedience

Real-World Implications

- Milgram's studies remain relevant in understanding obedience in institutional settings, workplace dynamics, and political structures
- Can they potentially explain genocide and intergroup hostility?
 - At least in part

Application to Societal Contexts



“Historically, the most terrible things—war, genocide, and slavery—have resulted not from disobedience, but from obedience.” —Howard Zinn



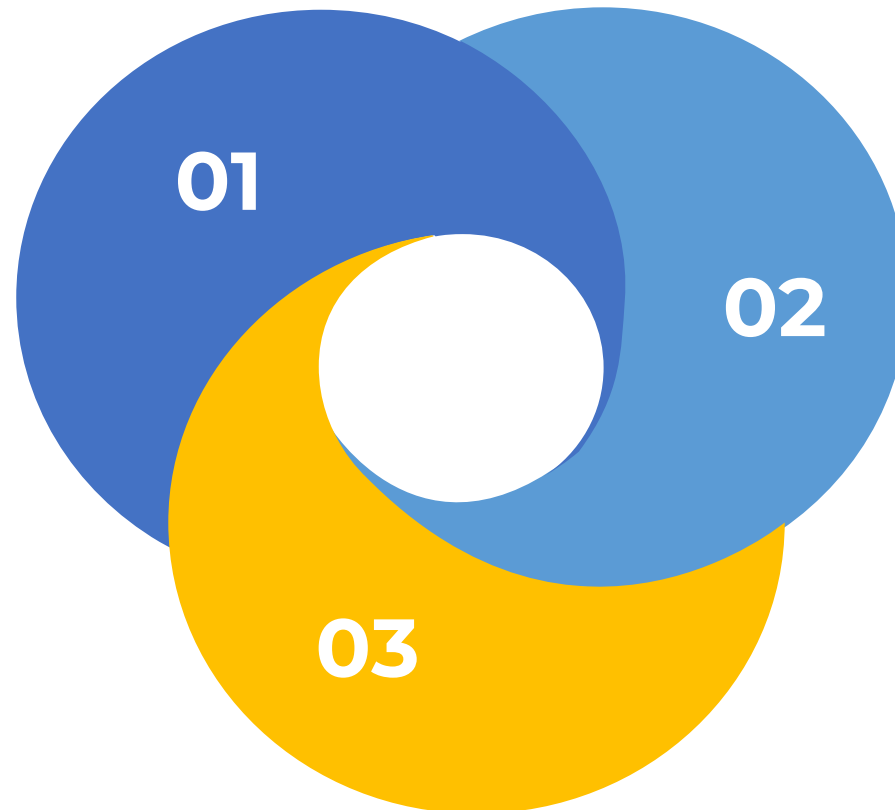
Conclusion

- 01 Encourage critical thinking, moral autonomy, and responsible leadership to mitigate negative effects of blind obedience
- 02 Milgram's studies highlight the interplay between societal norms, authority figures, and individual behaviour

Potential Psychological Explanations: Dehumanisation

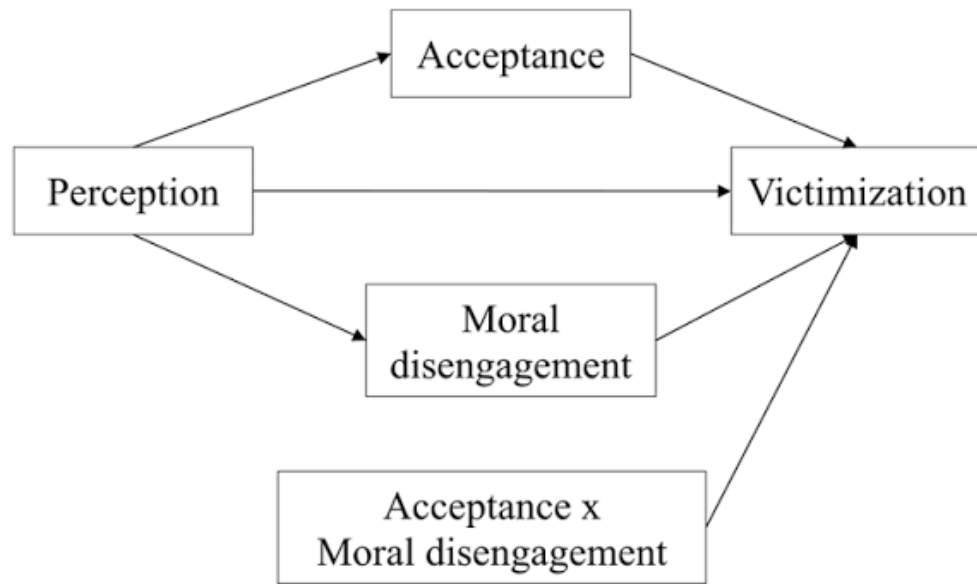
Genocide involves acts committed with intent to destroy a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group.

Psychological mechanisms contribute to the perpetration, endorsement, and prevention of genocide.



Genocide is deeply rooted in the human psyche.

Dehumanisation: Moral Disengagement



Bandura (2002)

- Albert Bandura's theory of moral disengagement explains how individuals distance themselves from the moral consequences of their actions.
- Moral disengagement mechanisms include moral justification, euphemistic labeling, advantageous comparison, displacement of responsibility, and diffusion of responsibility.



Moral Disengagement in Historical Examples

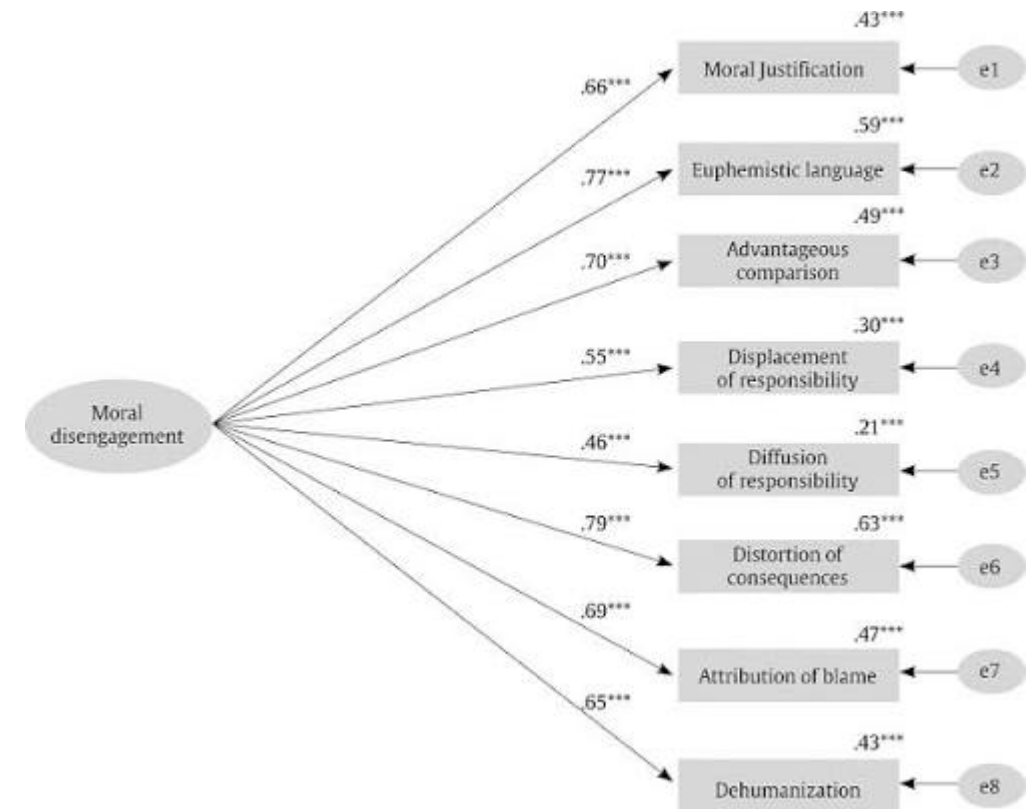
- 01 Milgram Experiment: examination of moral disengagement in the context of obedience to authority.
- 02 Nazi Germany: analysis of how moral disengagement mechanisms were employed during the Holocaust.

Contemporary Relevance of Moral Disengagement

01 Moral disengagement mechanisms observed in terrorism include moral justification, euphemistic labeling, and diffusion of responsibility.

02 Analysis of moral disengagement in modern-day conflicts, terrorism, and acts of aggression.

03 Focus on terrorism, modern-day conflicts, and acts of aggression.

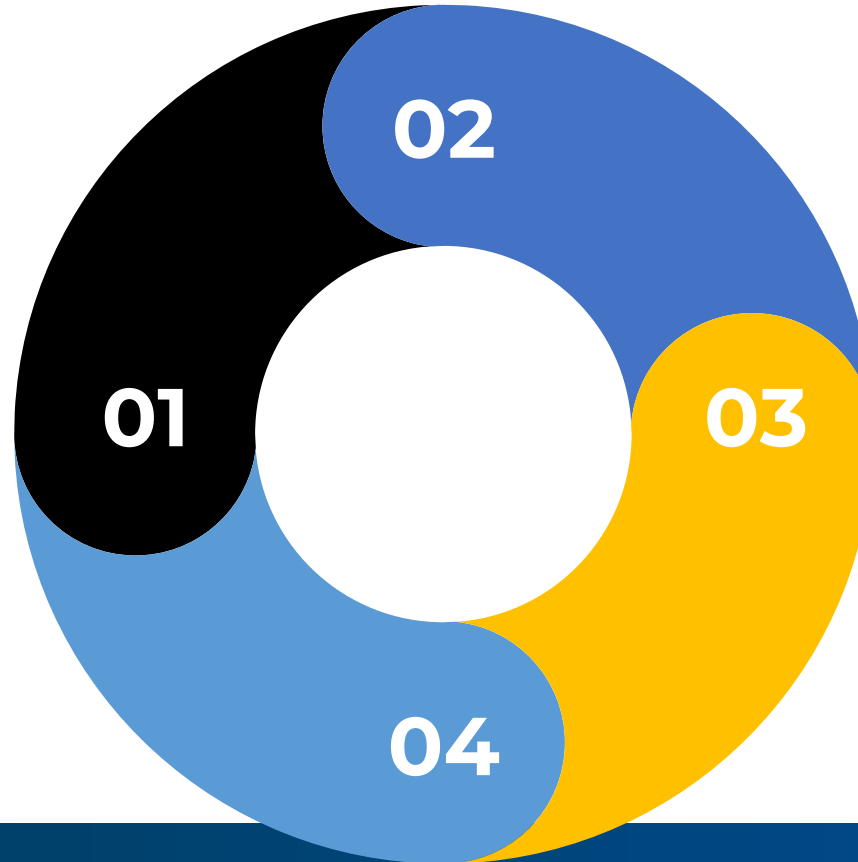


Gómez-Tabare et al. (2023)

Moral Disengagement in Modern-Day Conflicts

In conflicts, moral disengagement mechanisms can contribute to the perpetuation of violence and aggression.

Moral justification and displacement of responsibility observed in modern-day conflicts.



Individuals justify their actions based on national security or the greater good.

Soldiers displace responsibility onto higher-ranking officers or the government.



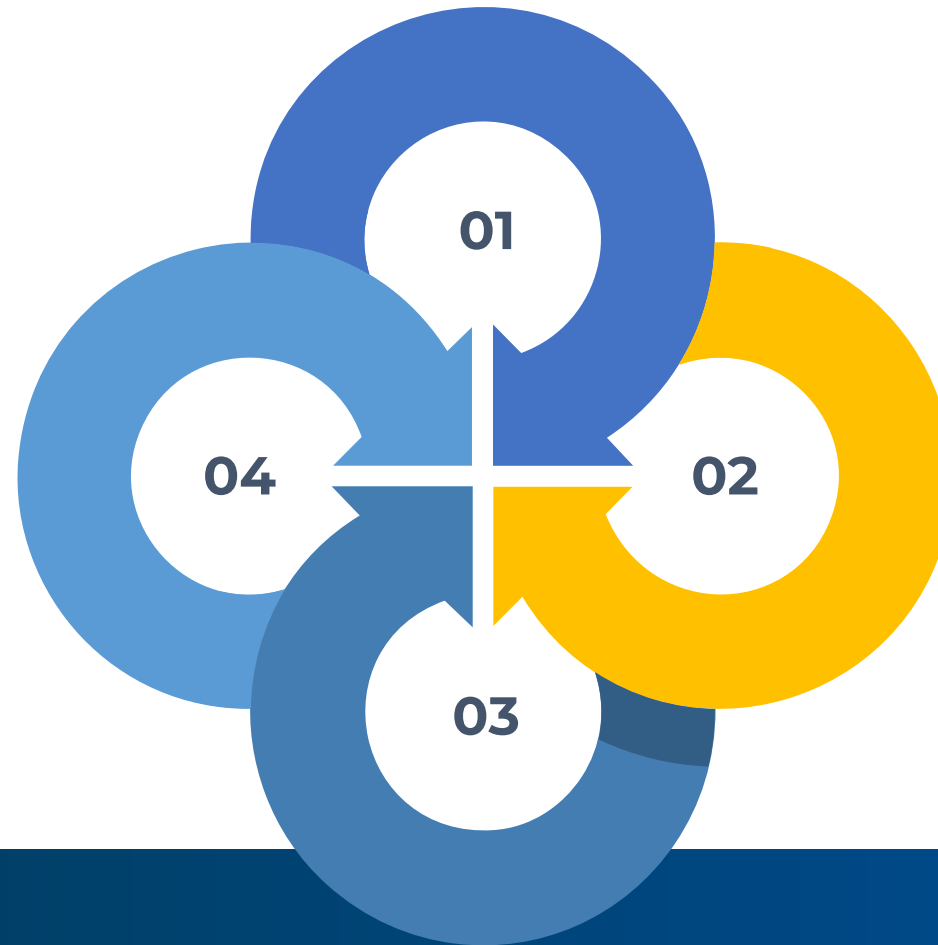
Moral Disengagement in Acts of Aggression

- In nonmilitary settings, moral disengagement mechanisms can be observed in interpersonal aggression or criminal behaviour.
- Moral justification and advantageous comparison are common in acts of aggression.
- Individuals may rationalise their aggression as self defense or retaliation.
- Comparing their actions to more extreme behaviours helps minimise the perceived severity.

Moral Disengagement in Social Media and Propaganda

Extremist groups use coded language and euphemisms to normalise violent ideologies.

The digital age has introduced new platforms for spreading propaganda and justifying acts of violence.

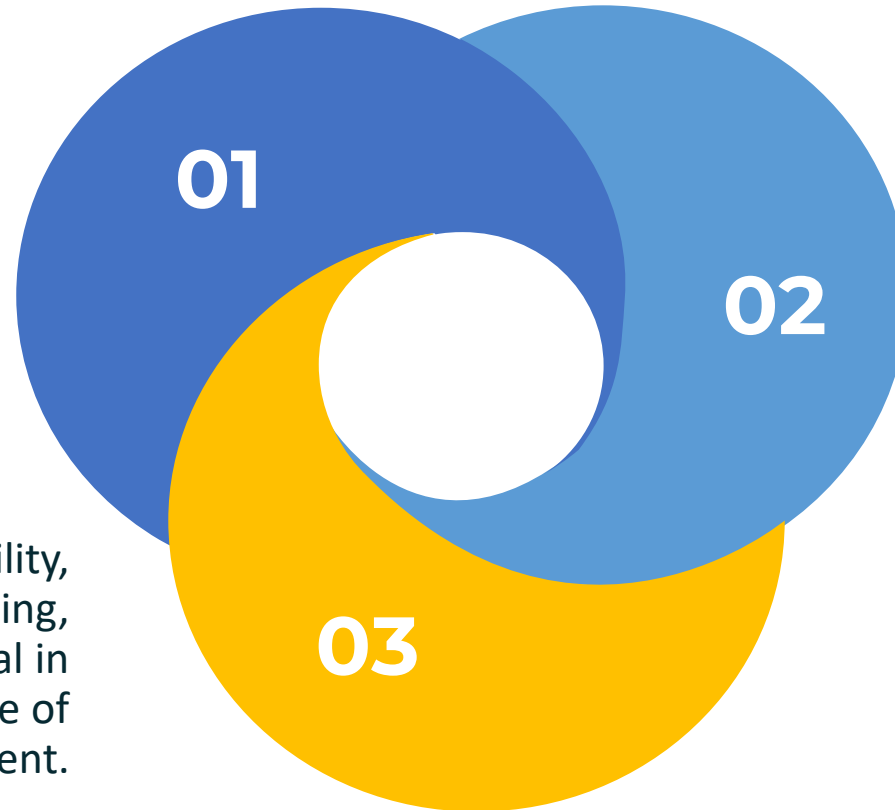


Social media platforms facilitate the diffusion of responsibility and reduce personal accountability.

Euphemistic labeling and displacement of responsibility are evident in social media and propaganda.

Implications and Ethical Considerations

Psychological consequences
of moral disengagement.



Ethical implications of
understanding and
manipulating moral
disengagement
mechanisms.

Promoting moral responsibility,
ethical conduct, critical thinking,
and empathy is crucial in
countering the influence of
moral disengagement.

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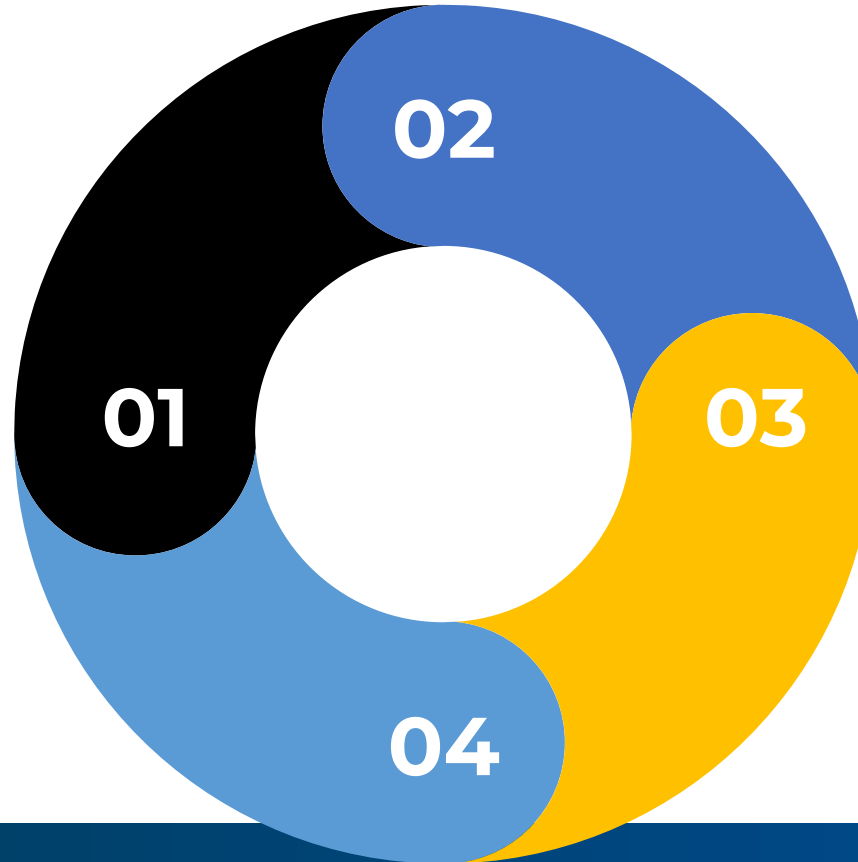
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Potential Psychological Explanations: Integrated Threat Theory

Integrated Threat Theory (ITT)

ITT is a framework developed
by Stephan and Stephan

ITT explains how perceived
threats from outgroups can
lead to intergroup anxiety,
negative attitudes, and
potentially violence



ITT distinguishes between
realistic threats and symbolic
threats

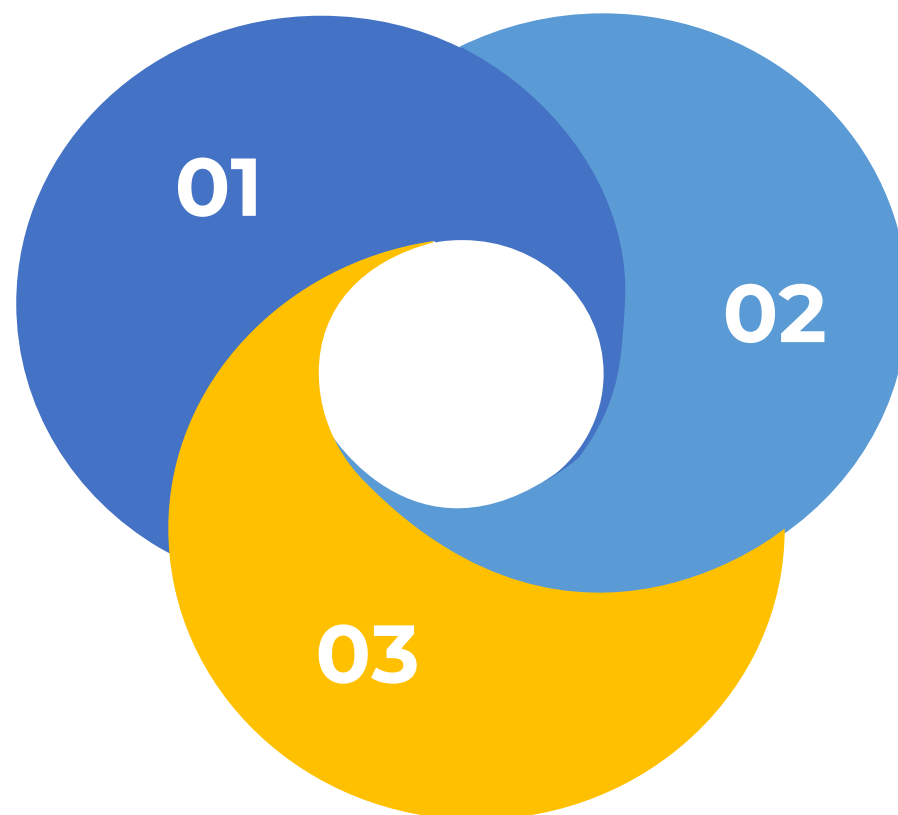
Intergroup anxiety and
negative stereotypes
contribute to intergroup
hostility

Empirical Evidence Supporting ITT

- Studies link perceived threats to negative attitudes and behaviours towards outgroups.
- Perceived threats to job security or cultural values result in xenophobia, support for restrictive policies, and discriminatory/violent acts.
- Empirical evidence highlights the relevance of perceived threats in fueling intergroup hostility.

Oversimplification of Threat Perception

ITT may oversimplify threat perception



Focuses primarily on conscious perceptions, potentially underestimating unconscious biases and societal narratives

Incorporating insights from cognitive and social psychology is necessary

Limited Scope in Explaining Violence

- ITT explains negative attitudes and discrimination, but may struggle to account for escalation to physical violence.
- Intergroup violence involves complex factors like leadership dynamics, group mobilisation, and situational triggers.
- Integrating ITT with other theories can provide a more comprehensive understanding

Cultural and Contextual Variability

01 Importance of contextualizing ITT within specific cultural and historical backgrounds

02 ITT's generalisability across cultures and contexts is limited

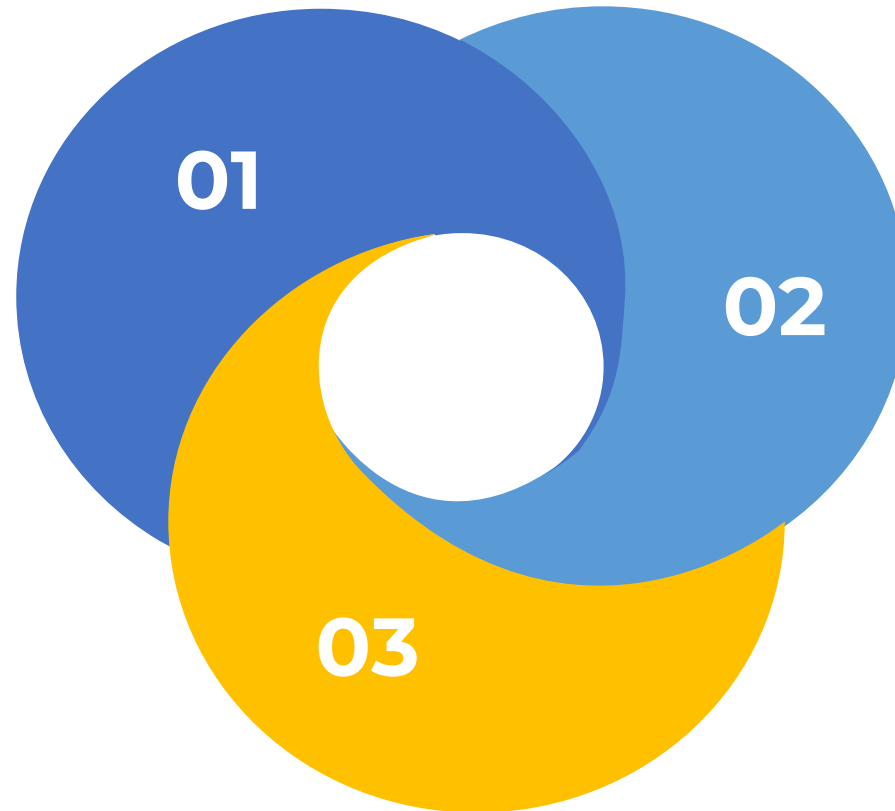
03 Impact of threats varies based on historical relationships, societal norms, and intergroup interactions.

Neglect of Positive Intergroup Relations

- ITT primarily focuses on negative outcomes of threat perceptions.
- Neglects conditions that foster positive intergroup relations.
- Contact Hypothesis suggests intergroup contact can reduce threats and improve relations

Addressing Root Causes of Perceived Threats

ITT emphasizes symptoms
(perceived threats) rather
than root causes



Structural inequalities,
historical injustices, and
power imbalances underlie
threat perceptions

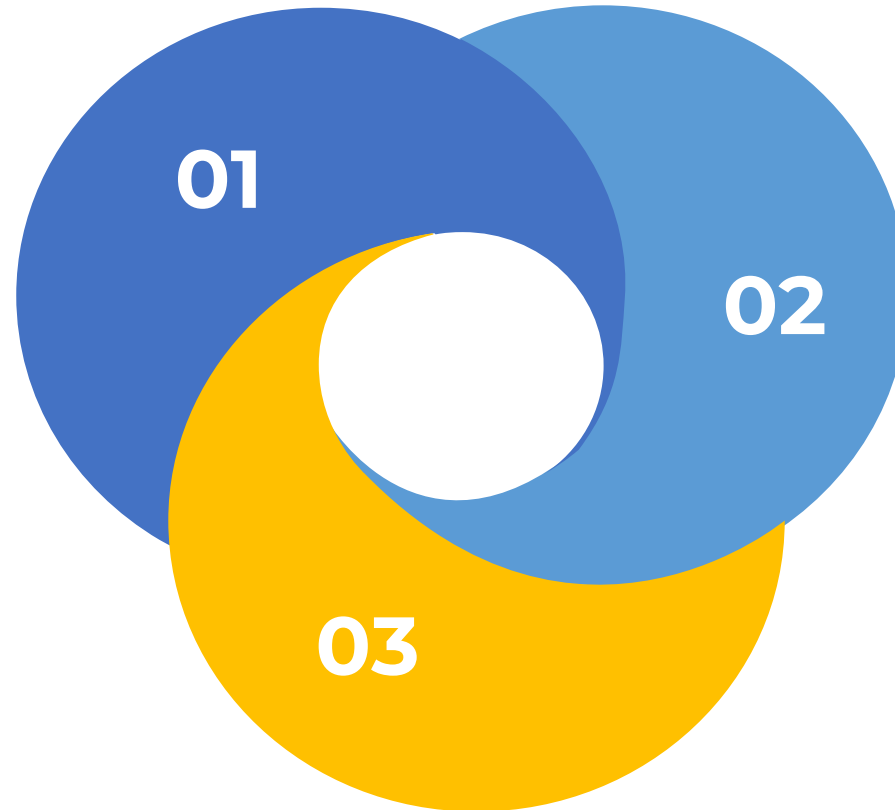
Addressing root causes is crucial
for long-term solutions to
intergroup violence



Potential Psychological Explanations: Social Identity Theory

Introduction

Social Identity Theory (SIT),
developed by Henri Tajfel and
John Turner in the 1970s



Individuals derive part of
their self-concept from their
membership in social
groups

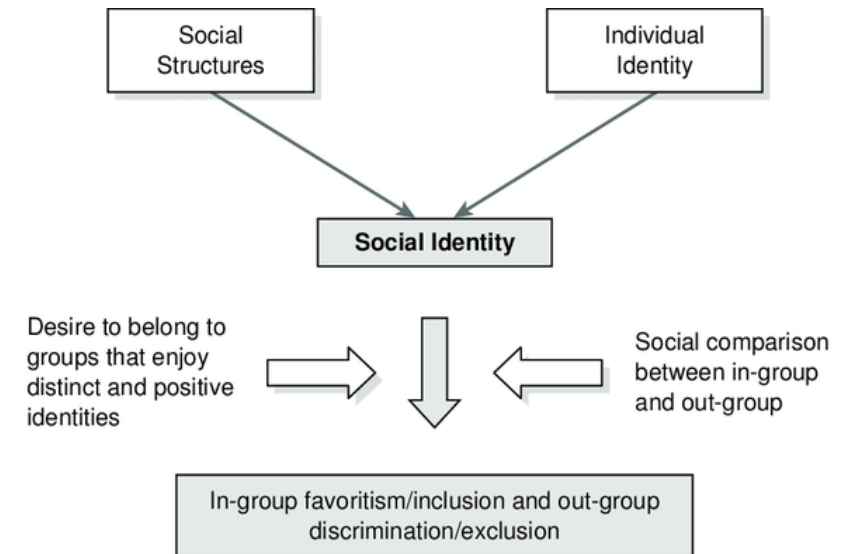
Leading to in-group favouritism
and out-group discrimination

SIT and Intergroup Violence

- 01 Support from empirical evidence and experiments
- 02 SIT explains the psychological underpinnings of intergroup violence
- 03 Identification with a group can lead to out-group discrimination

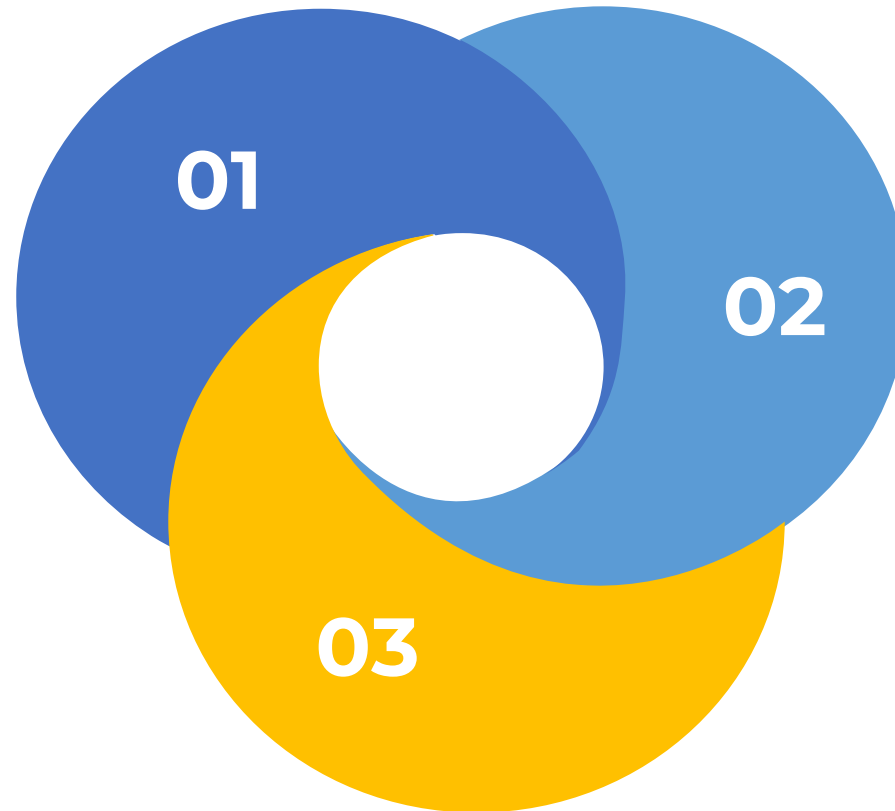
Empirical Support and Limitations

- Experiments and field studies support SIT's core proposition
- Minimal group experiments demonstrate how easily intergroup bias can be induced
- Limitations in explaining the escalation to violence
- Influence of economic, political, and historical contexts



Overemphasis on Cognitive Processes

SIT primarily focuses on cognitive processes



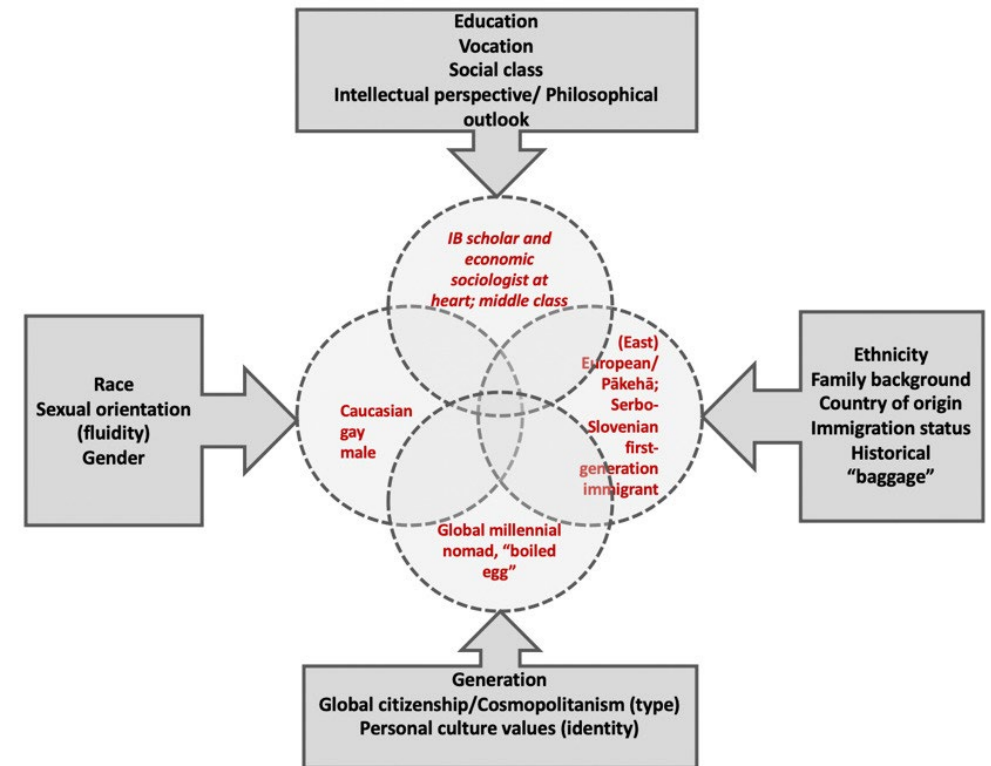
Argument for the inclusion of emotional and motivational dimensions

Intergroup Emotions Theory (IET; Mackie et al., 2002) offers an integrated approach



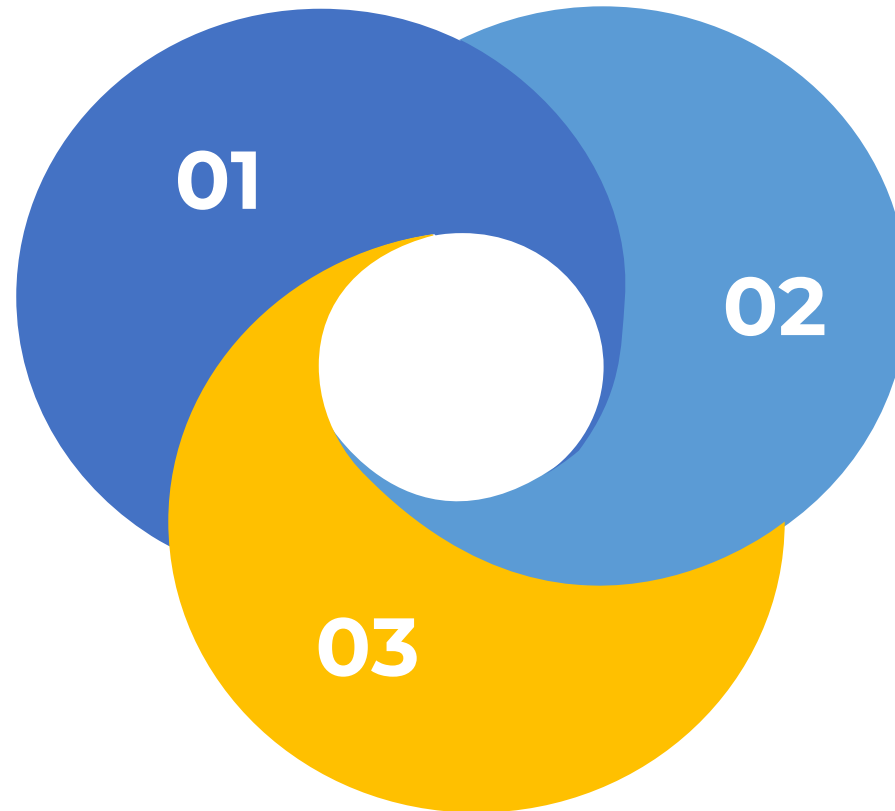
Contextual and Cultural Variability

- 01 Need for cultural sensitivity and cross-cultural research
- 02 SIT's generalizability across different contexts is criticised
- 03 Variations in social identities and intergroup dynamics across cultures



Neglect of Structural and Institutional Factors

SIT criticised for overlooking structural and institutional influences



Systemic inequality, state policies, and historical conflicts

Importance of power dynamics in perpetuating violence

Implications for Intervention

- SIT insights for intervention in intergroup violence.
- Challenges in translating theory into effective interventions.
- Importance of comprehensive strategies integrating psychological, sociopolitical, and economic interventions

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Psychological Impact on Perpetrators



Long-Term Psychological Effects

- Perpetrators may suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) characterised by flashbacks, nightmares, and emotional numbing.
- Moral injury, a concept introduced by Lifton, refers to the profound psychological wounds resulting from the violation of one's moral code.

- Prevention, intervention, and psychological rehabilitation are essential to address the profound human cost of genocidal acts.
- The psychological impact on perpetrators is a complex and troubling phenomenon.