

Cardinal Langley RC Sixth Form
Year 11 Student Guide
Preparing for...
Psychology A Level



Why Psychology?

So you've decided to find out more about psychology, what will I study? Will I be able to read people's minds? How will it be assessed? Is it suited to me and how will I prepare?

A Level Psychology is an ideal subject choice if you have an interest in understanding human behaviour from a scientific perspective. The subject investigates and explains human behaviour: from the formation of memories, through to the functioning of the central and peripheral nervous system, neurotransmitters and hormones.

You are about to embark upon an intense and exciting couple of years in which you will discover a whole new subject aimed to inspire and help you to:

- ❖ Understand more about effective learning thus improving your study habits
- ❖ Develop an empathetic and compassionate outlook and an appreciation of human diversity
- ❖ Support you to take risks and consider perspectives and outlooks that differ from your own
- ❖ Develop a crucial understanding of the highly scientific nature of Psychology including research skills, which will allow you to evaluate evidence and devise and conduct your own research.

Take this opportunity to delve into Psychology A'Level. Read and engage with the following information and activities and any questions do not hesitate to contact Vsmith@clrchs.co.uk.



A level Psychology

Paper 1

2 hours
96 marks
33.3% of final grade

Social Influence
Memory
Attachment
Psychopathology

Paper 2

2 hours
96 marks
33.3% of final grade

Approaches
Biopsychology
Research methods

Paper 3

2 hours
96 marks
33.3% of final grade

Issues & debates
Relationships
Schizophrenia
Addiction

Why Psychology?

Next year, you will develop understanding and skills in the following topics...

Social Influence
Research Methods
Memory
Attachment
Approaches in Psychology
Psychopathology & Bio Psychology

Try some pre-study aimed at these topics...

TASK 1: What kind of psychologist will you become?

Tick the answer which apply to you: a, b, c, or d

1. When recruiting participants for your experiment do you:

- A. Give them all the information you can and explain it in detail
- B. Give them a consent form to sign and then ignore it completely
- C. Don't give them a consent form because you need to lie to them
- D. Take absolute delight in lying your participants

2. When you design your experiment do you:

- A. Try to avoid any research where someone might break a nail, never mind deception
- B. Recruit students, sixth formers, and other powerless people because you think your research is the most important thing
- C. Know that deception is part of your field of work but make sure everyone is looked after well and has counselling if they need it
- D. Deception, that's how I make my living, go away minions...

3. Do you tell people at the outset that they have a right to withdraw from the experiment at any time.

- A. Yes, I absolutely make it clear every single time
- B. I try to, but sometimes I forget and my girlfriend has to remind me
- C. No because it would ruin my experiment, they have to obey!
- D. Excuse me, I have a contract to fulfil, are you mad?

4. Do you keep people's details confidential?

- A. Yes, always because I am aware of their human rights and the data protection act
- B. They are nameless, but I included details of their humiliation in my book, and on documentaries, but it was all done in the name of science and not for me, honest!
- C. Yes, but there are still photos around
- D. Are you stupid? I have to think of higher things like book deals, tours, after dinner speaking etc....

5. Do you protect your participants from physical or psychological harm

- A. I try very hard to do no harm
- B. Most of them, but you have to break eggs to make an omelette
- C. Yes, everyone had debriefing and I had counsellors on standby any time they needed it
- D. Are you some kind of killjoy? Do you understand entertainment at all?

TASK 1: What kind of psychologist will you become?

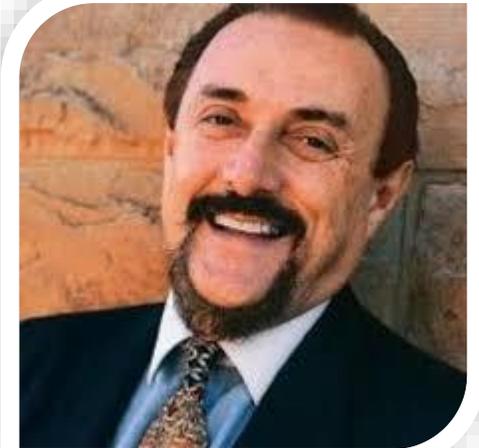


MOSTLY A

You are most likely going to turn into Professor Elizabeth Loftus. Elizabeth works on making Eyewitness testimony better so that only the right people go to prison. Her experiment showed that Eyewitnesses are not very good at remembering details when under stress.

MOSTLY B

You are most likely going to turn into Professor Philip Zimbardo. He did the famous Stanford Prison experiment to show how social roles change behaviour. He got so carried away with the experiment he lost sight of the effects on participants until his girlfriend, also a psychologist stepped in and stopped him. Dr Phil is everywhere on the net so he did rather well out of it all...



MOSTLY C

You are probably going to turn into Stanley Milgram. His parents were Jewish Refugees during the war. He watched the trial of Adolph Eichmann whose defence for atrocities toward Jews was "I was only obeying orders" He set up an experiment to test this. He had to deceive participants but was uncomfortable about it



MOSTLY D

You wish you could turn into Derren Brown. You know a lot about the application (some would say misapplication) of psychology. You are highly intelligent, but because your laboratory is the TV and your audience will pay, you are not subject to the ethical codes that the rest of the psychological world is constrained by.



Topic: Approaches to Psychology

The Famous five

There are five main Psychological approaches or perspectives.



Topic: Approaches in Psychology

Each approach in Psychology proposes a different explanation for behaviour.

Approach	Explains abnormal behaviour as...	Key Features	How the approach studies behaviour	Treatments
Biological	Abnormality is caused by a physical malfunction of a bodily system.	All mental disorders are related to some change in the body. Such changes influenced by: Biochemistry, viruses, neuroanatomy, genetics...	Scientifically Use of laboratory experiments, blood tests, EEG, MRI etc.	Tackle somatic (bodily) causes of disorder. These include: Neuro surgery ECT Drugs
Psychodynamic	Abnormality is a result of repression of unresolved conflicts between unconscious desires.	Behaviour is driven by unconscious desires. Conflict between desires is not resolved it may cause problems later e.g. phobia. Repression pushes traumatic events into unconscious	Through individuals (case studies)	Psychoanalysis identifies and resolves unconscious, unresolved conflicts. Techniques include: Word association Dream analysis
Behavioural	Abnormal behaviour is a result of learning.	Behaviour is learned via stimulus response links. Reinforcement (positive & negative) of behaviour important – Operant Conditioning Classical Conditioning involved in phobia development	Through observations	Systematic desensitisation Patients taught to replace maladaptive responses with desirable ones as they are gradually exposed to their fear. Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
Cognitive	Abnormal behaviour is caused by faulty thought patterns	Maladaptive thought processes result in maladaptive behaviour. Extends behavioural approach focussing on thinking between stimulus and response	Through Laboratory studies	Maladaptive thought processes identified and restructured to make them adaptive. For e.g. CBT

Here is an extract from a brief psychological assessment made by a psychiatrist:

'K' is a 30 year old man who has had a long history of violence. He was most recently arrested (for the 5th time) for an attack on another man in a crowded pub. 'K' claimed that the man had knocked his drink and laughed about it.

At the time of the arrest, 'K' was found to have abnormally high levels of testosterone (as well as a high blood alcohol level).

He reported many experiences of seeing his father being aggressive and suffered himself in the form of beatings. 'K' said very little about his mother, who appeared to have been absent during this time, although this did not seem to be a concern for 'K'. 'K' was excluded from school on many occasions for bullying other children.

'K' had a philosophy on life, it was *'never show weakness to others'*

I recommend further detailed psychological assessment.



TASK 2: Can you use the table to apply the approaches to the case study of K?

	Why does K behave in the way he does?	How might this approach assess K?	How would they treat K's problems?
Biological			
Cognitive			
Behavioural			
Psychodynamic			

Which approach do you believe to be the most likely cause of K's behaviour?

Task 3

Topic: Memory

Mini Experiment:

In this experiment you can test as many or as little people as you like. As the experimenter you should read out one line at a time of the triangle of numbers below to your participant. When you have finished reading out the line, your participant should recite back to you as many of the numbers they can remember. Record how many numbers they recall correctly on each line.

6
27 35
10 28 22
38 46 10 11
52 8 19 81 17
55 38 29 13 8 71
75 17 20 61 82 5 12
61 38 17 40 49 84 57 8
71 22 31 89 47 5 1 16 94
18 95 48 30 89 67 18 11 15 17
76 83 40 28 25 12 15 53 95 49 20
16 9 11 17 49 50 28 69 24 53 78 10
77 53 49 76 19 94 87 64 23 19 15 51 2
78 56 34 19 27 20 80 42 38 64 29 10 79 31

Now think about and explain:

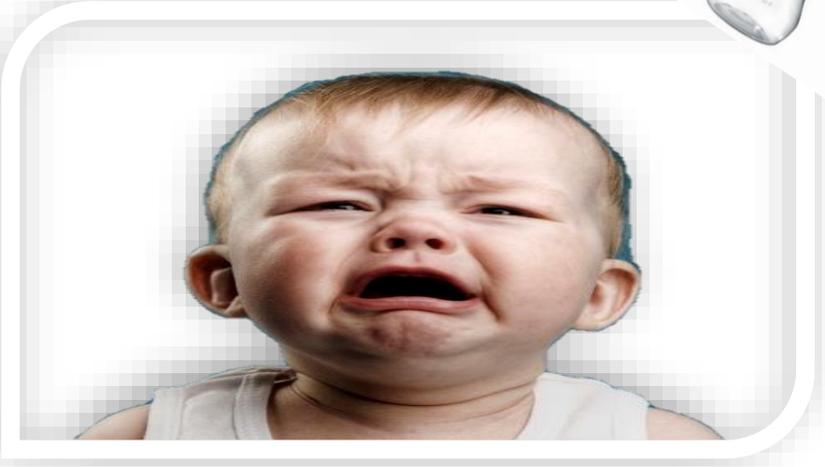
- 1) What was the maximum amount of numbers your participants call recall from any line? (If you used more than one participant, take the average).
- 2) What do your results suggest about memory?

Now research and answer the following...

- 1) What is memory? Does it have different types? If so, explain them and justify your answer...
- 2) What is the capacity and duration of the average memory in humans?
- 3) What did George Miller do in 1956? What did he discover about memory? How does this link to the results from your experiment above?

Task 4

Topic: Attachment



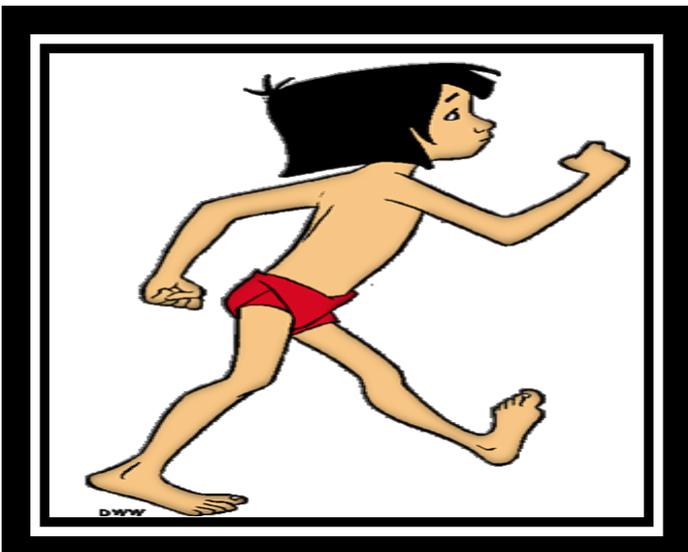
Babies, Babies, Babies...

Research and answer the following:

From a Psychological Perspective...

Why do babies cry all of the time?

Useful Link: http://www.babycenter.com/2_creating-an-attachment-with-your-baby_10350318.bc



“Oh, oobee doo I wanna be like you...”

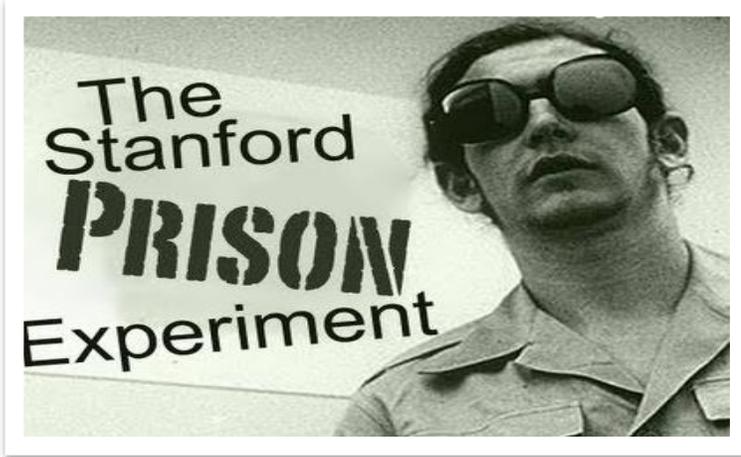
Consider, research and answer the following:

From a Psychological point of view, why should Mowgli not survive in the Jungle?

Hint: Try to link to the psychologist John Bowlby in your answer...

Task 5

Topic: Social Influence



Obedience, Obey, Conform...

Research and produce a fact sheet on two key studies:

- 1) Milgram's (1963) Obedience to Authority
- 2) Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment

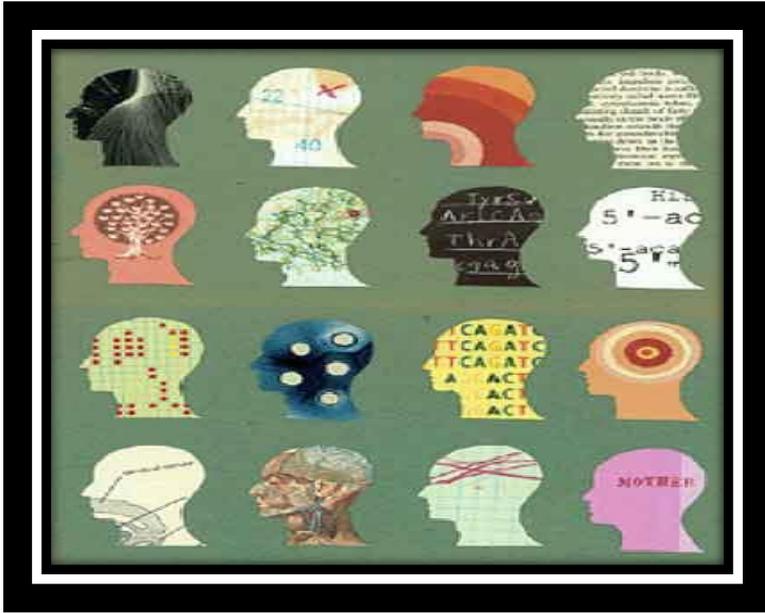


Taking it further...

Explain how research such as Milgram & Zimbardo, might explain historical atrocities such as the Nazi persecution of the Jews...

Task 6

Topic: Psychopathology



What is normal?

Consider, research and explain...

- 1) Is there such a thing as normal and abnormal? What are the definitions of these?
- 2) How do Psychologists decide what is abnormal?

Fear. Sadness. Obsession.



Produce a fact file on each of the following mental disorders. Include **symptoms**, potential **causes** and **treatments**.

- 1) Phobias
- 2) Depression
- 3) OCD

Task 7

Topic: *Research Methods*

Now to the biggest and most controversial debate of them all....

Most people assume Psychology is an easy or 'soft' subject which cannot possibly be a science. But is it?

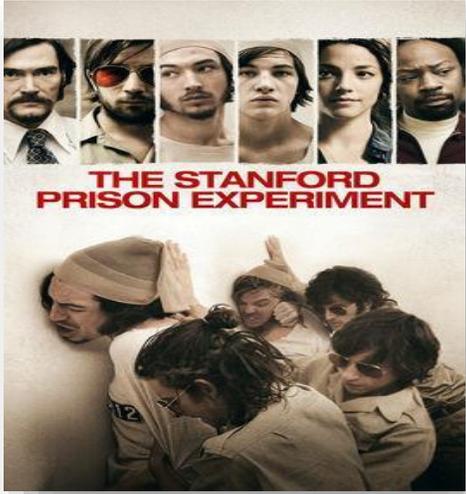
It is your job to come to a conclusion as to whether or not Psychology IS a hard science.

Research arguments for and against Psychology as a Science and produce a debate on this.

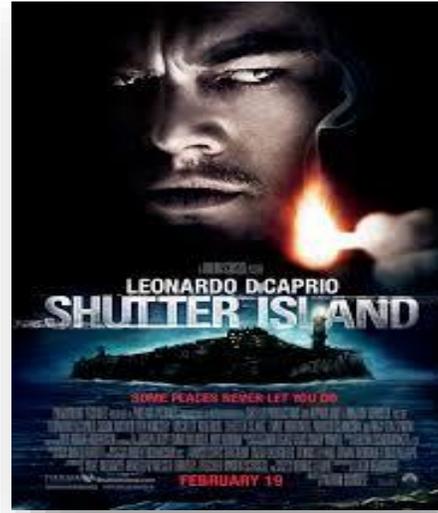
Consider:

- 1)The Subject Content
- 2)Research Methods Used

Films to watch



What happens when you put good people in an evil place? Does humanity win over evil, or does evil triumph? These are some of the questions we posed in this dramatic simulation of prison life. In 1971, Stanford's Professor Philip Zimbardo conducts a controversial psychology experiment. Twenty four male students are selected to take on randomly assigned roles of prisoners and guards in a mock prison situated in the basement of the Stanford psychology building.

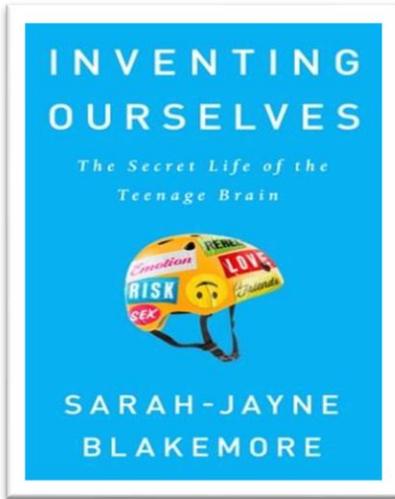


Shutter Island is a 2010 American neo-noir psychological thriller film. Leonardo DiCaprio stars as U.S. Marshal Edward "Teddy" Daniels, who is investigating a psychiatric facility on Shutter Island after one of the patients goes missing. Mark Ruffalo plays his partner officer; Ben Kingsley is the facility's lead psychiatrist; Max von Sydow is a German doctor; and Michelle Williams is Daniels's wife.



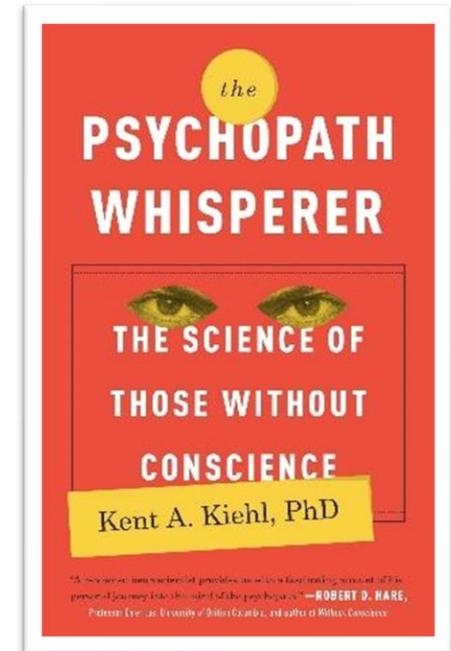
The Real Rain Man documents Kim Peek, the genius who inspired Dustin Hoffman's character in Rain Man. Classed as a mega-savant, having memorised 12,000 books, including the entire Bible, he also has autism, finding it hard to do day-to-day tasks.

Books to read

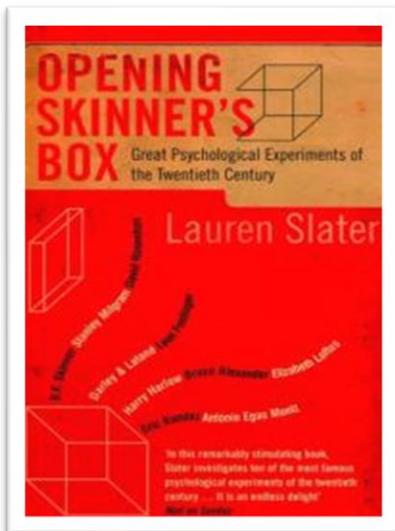


Drawing upon her cutting-edge research Professor Blakemore explores: What makes the adolescent brain different? Why does an easy child become a challenging teenager? What drives the excessive risk-taking and the need for intense friendships common to teenagers? Why it is that many mental illnesses – depression, addiction, schizophrenia – begin during these formative years. And she shows that while adolescence is a period of vulnerability, it is also a time of enormous creativity and opportunity.

We know of psychopaths from chilling headlines and stories in the news and movies from Ted Bundy and John Wayne Gacy, to Hannibal Lecter and Dexter Morgan. As Dr Kent Kiehl shows, psychopaths can be identified by a checklist of symptoms that includes pathological lying; lack of empathy, guilt, and remorse; grandiose sense of self-worth; manipulation; and failure to accept ones actions. But why do psychopaths behave the way they do? Is it the result of their environment how they were raised or is there a genetic component to their lack of conscience?



In *Opening Skinner's Box*, Lauren Slater sets out to investigate the twentieth century through a series of ten fascinating, witty and sometimes shocking accounts of its key psychological experiments. Starting with the founder of modern scientific experimentation, B.F. Skinner, Slater traces the evolution of the last hundred years' most pressing concerns - free will, authoritarianism, violence, conformity and morality.



Best TED talks

1. [How we read each other's minds, Rebecca Saxe](#)

According to Saxe, a professor of neuroscience at MIT, you don't need tarot cards or ESP to read people's minds. A functioning right temporo-parietal junction will do just fine. In her talk, Saxe explains how this brain region allows humans to be uncannily good at sensing other people's feelings, thoughts, and motivations.

2. [The riddle of experience vs. memory, Daniel Kahneman](#)

If you're looking for highly credentialed TED speakers, Kahneman's résumé won't fail to impress. A Nobel Prize-winning psychologist and bestselling author, Kahneman uses his 20 minutes on the TED stage to explain that there are actually two flavours of happiness: the kind we experience in the moment and the kind we experience in our memories. Maximizing your own well-being in life means keeping both in mind.

3. [The paradox of choice, Barry Schwartz](#)

More choice is always better, right? Not according to Schwartz, a psychologist who argues that having to decide which of approximately 6,000 brands of similar toothpaste to buy "has made us not freer but more paralysed, not happier but more dissatisfied.

4. [Are we in control of our own decisions?, Dan Ariely](#)

This talk "uses classic visual illusions and Ariely's own counterintuitive (and sometimes shocking) research findings to show how we're not as rational as we think when we make decisions.

5. [Flow, the secret to happiness, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi](#)

In this talk, legendary psychologist Csikszentmihalyi dares to ask one of life's biggest questions: What makes us happy? The answer isn't fame or money, he insists, but flow -- that lost-in-time feeling you get when you focus intensely on work you're good at.

6. [The power of vulnerability, Brené Brown](#)

One of the top-five-most-popular TED Talks of all time, this moving account of Brown's own struggles with shame and control weaves together sometimes hilarious personal anecdotes with hard research to convince viewers that forging real connections requires the bravery to be vulnerable.

7. [The psychology of evil, Philip Zimbardo](#)

Psychology isn't all happiness and flourishing, of course. The discipline also delves into the darker sides of human nature and what drives us toward unethical or even downright evil behaviour. That's the topic of this talk by 'superstar' Zimbardo in which "he shares insights and graphic unseen photos from the Abu Ghraib trials." But don't worry, it's not all gloom and doom. He also 'talks about the flip side: how easy it is to be a hero, and how we can rise to the challenge.'

MOOCs

A Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) is an interactive step-by-step course aimed at reaching an unlimited number of participants worldwide to create a community of lifelong learners. There are many different MOOC providers that cover a huge variety of different subject and topic interests.

Typically a MOOC will involve 2-3 hours study per week for 6 weeks or so. MOOCs are free of charge. All required course materials will be provided for you online, which is also 100% free! Each course is open to anyone with internet access across the world and all you need is your wonderful brain!

Here are a few that you may wish to try.



[Making sense of mental health problems](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/making-sense-mental-health-problems)

www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/making-sense-mental-health-problems

[Starting with psychology](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/psychology/starting-psychology)

www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/psychology/starting-psychology



[Psychological research, obedience and ethics](http://www.open.edu/openlearn/society-politics-law/sociology/psychological-research-obedience-and-ethics)

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