Evolutionary explanation for group displays of aggression

AO1:

Two explanations for mob behaviour:

- **Power threat hypothesis**: When minority gains status, power and membership the majority intensify efforts to maintain in control. Evolved as dominant group wishes to stay together in power to ensure survival. In relation to American lynch mobs of black African americans, fear of political power in black community, white people felt a shift in power so less access to resources, jobs and women (reproductive opportunities). White communities may have felt at risk. **Ridley** suggests cooperative group defence and antagonism of outsiders occur hand in hand when one group at risk.

- **Dehumanisation of individuals**: People are reduced to a form that is unrecognisable as humans. **Hyatt** argued ritualistic nature of killings of mob people reduced victims to bits of flesh and bone, rather than an actual human being. Also seen as because black people have been seen animalistic in nature (because of propaganda) so seen as animalistic creatures that are hated without human worth. For mobs it was reassuring as act of killing became easier so less guilt. Evolved adaptation to power base threat.

AO2:

- **Clark**- murders by lynch mobs in Sao Paulo going against Power threat hypothesis. Victims were mainly afro carribbean, yet not political or economic threat to dominant group. Other processes must be going on so **reductionist**

- **Rosenberg**- evidence for dehumanisation in guatamala- although most cases of murder were in response to serious crimes, there was some revenge for minor offences. Dousing corpses in petrol, burning publicly to degrade further. Removed moral constraints.

- **Cultural**- As crowd size increases so does the level of violence, leading to greater anonymity in the crowd, therefore lessened responsibility and is consistent with deindividuation theory. Contradicts both power threat hypothesis and dehumanisation of individuals.

- **Real world applications**: not all crowds result in aggressive behaviour as religious festivals such as Mela, can result in prosocial behaviour. This could actually promote non aggressive behaviour. **Individual differences**.

AO3:

- **Deterministic**- unclear whether such group behaviour is unconscious or whether it is regulated by the persons free will and consciousness. People can choose their own actions and evolutionary theory does not account for this.

- **Limited practical applications**- incomplete explanation so **reductionist** as there is no **scientific validation** from practical applications in order to offer full explanations of phenomena.

- **Cultural bias**- If it was evolutionary everyone everywhere would have the same attitude towards aggression yet for example, the Kung San tribe view aggression in a very negative way. Also research is selected on examples from specific cultures, so low external validity and lack of generalisation. Aggression in groups may be culturally determined rather than evolutionary.