

Types of Conformity

- **Compliance:** behaviour/attitudes are changed publicly but not privately.
- **Identification:** a person changes their behaviour and beliefs, but only while they are in the presence of the group they are identifying with.
- **Internalisation:** a person changes their behaviour and beliefs both publicly and privately. This is when a true change occurs.

Explanations of Conformity

- **Normative Social Influence:** Conforming to be accepted or belong to a group. The desire to be liked.
- **Informative Social Influence:** Conforming to gain knowledge, or because they believe that someone else is 'right'. The desire to be right.

Conformity to social roles: when an individual adopts a particular behaviour and belief, while in a particular social situation.

Zimbardo's Research in to Conformity to Social Roles (1973)

Aim: to examine whether people conform to the social roles

Participants: 21 male university students (volunteers)

Method: Each participant was randomly assigned to the role of prisoner or guard. The basement of Stanford University was turned into a mock prison. 'Prisoners' were arrested by real local police and given a numbered smock to wear, with chains placed around their ankles. The guards were given uniforms and were instructed to run the prison without using physical violence.

Results: Prisoners and guards quickly identified with their social roles. Prisoners rebelled, but guards grew abusive and dehumanised them. The study was stopped after 6 days.

Evaluating Explanations of Conformity

- **Asch's (1951)** found many participants went along with wrong answers to avoid disapproval from the rest of the group. This supports NSI.
- **Jenness (1932).** When asked to estimate the number of beans in a jar, participants moved closer to a group estimate rather than an individual one. This supports ISI.
- Individual differences need to be considered. Some people are 'nAffiliators' (someone who tends to please others/conforms due to NSI).
- Positive implications: it is possible to use normative and informative influence in marketing and shaping behaviours.

Evaluating Zimbardo's Research

- The study is unethical. Five prisoners left the experiment early because of the physical/mental torment. Some guards felt anxiety.
- Zimbardo lacked objectivity because he was responding in the role of superintendent of the prison rather than as the researcher.
- The study has real-world implications for helping to understand why riots and violence occur in prisons, and why some people conform to roles, behaving in ways they would not normally.
- There is opposing research. **Reicher and Haslam (2006)** replicated Zimbardo's research however the guards did not identify with their status and refused to impose their authority.

Asch (1951) aimed to examine how social pressure to conform from a unanimous majority affects conformity in an unambiguous situation.

- 123 male undergraduate students from Swarthmore College in the USA, believed they were taking part in a vision test.
- One real (naïve) participant was placed in a room with six to eight **confederates**. The real participant was always seated second from last.
- Each person had to say out loud which line (A, B or C) was most like the target line in length.
- The correct answer was obvious, and confederates purposely got it wrong on 12 of the trials, called 'critical trials'.

- On average, the real participants conformed to the incorrect answers on 32% of the critical trials.
- 74% of the participants conformed on at least one critical trial

Variables Affecting Conformity

1. **Group size:** When there was 1 confederate, participants conformed on 3% of the critical trials. When group size increased to two confederates, participants conformed in 12.8% of the critical trials. It peaks at 3 confederates.
2. **Unanimity:** Conformity dropped to 5% when there was a dissenter among the confederates.
3. **Task Difficulty:** When the task was made harder, conformity increased.
4. **Mode of response:** When answers were given anonymously (written down) conformity decreased.

Evaluation

- The research lacks population validity (cultural bias and gender bias) and uses a specialist group (students). Results cannot be generalised accurately beyond this sample.
- The research lacks ecological validity since the task was artificial and lacks the consequences that may exist in real situations where conformity may occur.
- The study is a 'child of its time' meaning it lacks temporal validity. **Perrin and Spencer (1980)** used maths and engineering students in a replication of Asch's study and found significantly lower levels of conformity, suggesting Asch's experiment lacks historical validity.
- There are ethical issues with the research, such as deception about the aim and use of confederates. Additionally, the participants experienced distress, however, the aim of the study required some pressure.

What do the variables tell us?

- People are more likely to conform when there are more people/is more pressure to do so, however, this becomes less effective with too many people.
- When we feel anonymous and less likely to face rejection, we will resist conformity.
- When tasks are harder, we are more likely to conform, but this could be due to ISI rather than NSI.

Situational Factors Affecting Obedience

Situational explanations for obedience focus on external factors that affect the likelihood that someone will obey orders. E.g. proximity, location, uniform.

Milgram's Original Study

- **Aim:** To investigate whether ordinary people would obey an unjust order from an authority figure and inflict pain and injure an innocent person.
- 40, male American participants volunteered for a study on 'memory and learning' unaware that the study was on obedience.
- They were introduced to a confederate (**Mr Wallace**) at Yale University and 'assigned' roles, with the real participant always the teacher, (administering the test and shocks for a wrong/absent answer) and Mr Wallace, always the learner (he will get questions wrong on purpose)
- Verbal prods were given to encourage the participant to give the shocks which increased from 15v to 450v (they were not real)
- **Results:** 100% reached 350v, and 65% reached 450v (maximum)

Situational Variables

1. **Proximity:** When the teacher and learner were in the same room, the no. of people reaching 450 decreased to 40%. When instructions were given over the phone, they decreased further to 20%.
2. **Uniform:** When the experimenter changed the lab coat for normal clothes, the no. of people reaching 450v decreased to 20%.
3. **Location:** When the venue was changed from Yale (prestigious) to rundown offices (questionable authority) the no. of people reaching 450v decreased to 47.5%.
4. **Responsibility:** When someone administered the shocks for the participant, obedience increased (92.5%).

Evaluation

- **Bickman (1974)** supports the role of uniform. When people were asked to pick up litter by a uniformed person, they were more obedient in contrast to when they wore civilian clothes.
- Obedience may be culturally influenced, supporting the role of situational factors. **Kilman and Mann (1974)** replicated Milgram's original study in Australia but found that only 16% of the participants reached 450v.
- Milgram's methodological approach to systematically changing one variable at a time in his experiments investigating the effect of variations on obedience can be praised for having high reliability. There was consistency (except the IV) in the variations.
- Dispositional explanations of obedience contrast situational factors. Instead of focusing on external factors, dispositional explanations focus on the role of the individual and personality affecting obedience.

Dispositional Factors Affecting Obedience

- Traits of a person that make them obedient, such as personality.
- The authoritarian personality has been associated with higher levels of obedience.
- The authoritarian personality was first identified by Adorno et al. (1950) and refers to a person who has extreme respect for authority and is more likely to be obedient to those who hold power over them.

Research: Adorno et al (1950)

Aim: To investigate unconscious views towards other racial groups.

Participants: Over 2,000 middle-class, Caucasian Americans

Method: Several questionnaires were created including the **F-scale**, which measures fascist tendencies. E.g. 'Obedience and respect for authority are the most important virtues children should learn'

Findings: People who scored high on the F-scale self-reported identifying with 'strong' people and showed disrespect towards the 'weak'. They showed excessive respect to those in higher power.

Conclusion: Individuals with an authoritarian personality were more obedient to authority figures and showed extreme submissiveness and respect. They believe that society requires strong leadership to enforce rigid, traditional values.

Research: Elms and Milgram (1966)

Aim: to see if the obedient participants in Milgram's research were more likely to display authoritarian personality traits, in comparison to disobedient participants.

Participants: 20 obedient participants, who administered the full 450 volts and 20 disobedient participants, who refused to continue.

Method: Each participant completed several personality questionnaires, including Adorno's F scale.

Findings: The obedient participants scored higher on the F scale, in comparison to disobedient participants.

Conclusion: Obedience is influenced by the authoritarian personality.

Other evaluation

- Milgram and Elms rely on correlational research which means only a relationship can be inferred between obedience and dispositional factors, rather than cause and effect.
- There are opposing explanations of obedience. Situational factors such as uniform and proximity can explain obedience. Perhaps both explanations need to be used together.
- **Middendorp and Meleon (1990)** found that less-educated people are more likely to display authoritarian personality characteristics, than well-educated people. Therefore, it is not authoritarian personality characteristics that lead to obedience, but levels of education.

Social Support

- Having an **ally**/someone else who resists conformity or obedience
- Increases your confidence and decreases your fear of ridicule
- This makes you more likely to resist conformity or obedience

For example, if you are asked by a teacher to complete a task, but see that others are not completing it, you will feel more confident in being disobedient.

Social Support: Evaluation

- Research support: In one of **Asch's (1951)** variations, one of the confederates was instructed to give the correct answer throughout. In this variation, the rate of conformity dropped to 5%. Therefore, social support does help to **resist conformity**.
- Research support: In one of **Milgram's variations**, the real participant was paired with two additional who refused to go on and withdrew from the experiment early. In this variation, the percentage of participants who reached 450 volts dropped to 10%. Therefore, social support helps to **resist obedience**.

Locus of Control

- The extent to which people believe they have control over their own lives
- **Internal locus of control**: believe what happens in life is the result of their own behaviour. They are independent and **likely to resist social influence**.
- **External locus of control**: believe that what happens to them is controlled by external factors. They are less likely to resist social influence.

For example, John is playing with his friends and sees them bully someone. There is normative social influence pressure to join in. John has an internal locus of control, meaning he will hold himself responsible for his actions, so resists pressures to join in.

Locus of Control: Evaluation

- Research support: **Spector (1983)** found that individuals with a high internal locus of control were less likely to conform than those with a high external locus of control, but only in situations of normative social influence.
- Research suggests that locus of control is more influential when resisting normative social influence than informational.
- Research support: **Oliner & Oliner (1998)** interviewed non-Jewish survivors of WWII. They found that those who had resisted orders (e.g. helped Jewish people) were more likely to have a high internal locus of control than those who obeyed the Nazis.

What makes a minority influential?

1. **Consistency:** when minority groups say the same thing over time (**diachronic consistency**) and the same thing as each other (**synchronic consistency**).
2. **Commitment:** when the minority group makes sacrifices or engages in risky behaviour to draw attention to their views.
3. **Flexibility:** when the minority group is willing to compromise.

Social change refers to how a **society** develops over time to replace beliefs, attitudes, and behaviour with new norms and expectations. For example, The Suffragettes: who were **consistent** in their view and persistently used educational and political arguments to draw attention to female rights.

Processes in social change

- **Consistency:** agreement over time and between members of the minority group.
- **Deeper processing:** the majority internalise the change needed
- **Augmentation principle:** sacrifice and risk convince the majority
- **Drawing attention:** the majority become aware of the need for change
- **Snowball effect:** the minority grows to the majority
- **Social Cryptoamnesia:** not recalling how the change happened
- **Gradual commitment:** adopting change gradually over time

Evaluation of Minority Influence

- Research support: **Moscovici (1969)** found that when confederates were consistent in their answer about a coloured slide, real participants agreed on 8.2% of the trials, but on only 1.25% of the trials when they were inconsistent.
- Research support: **Nemeth (1986)** found that when participants were asked to agree on compensation for a victim of a ski lift accident, minorities were more successful when they were flexible (e.g. agreed to a slightly higher amount) rather than inflexible.
- Population validity: Moscovici used a biased sample of 172 female participants from America. As a result, we are unable to generalise the results to other populations.

Evaluation of Social Change

- Minority influence can act as a barrier to social change. **Bashir et al. (2013)** found that some minority groups live up to the stereotypes associated with those groups, which can be off-putting for outsiders.
- Research support: **Nolan et al. (2008)** found that using normative messages (e.g. saying 'everyone' is reducing their energy consumption) led to more change than just information about energy consumption.
- Research support has methodological flaws (e.g. Asch, Moscovici) therefore anything we understand about processes in social change should be taken with caution.