

Revision Notes



SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Specification

Social Influence

- **Types of Conformity: Internalisation, identification and compliance. Explanations for conformity: informational social influence and normative social influence, and variables affecting conformity including group size, unanimity and task difficulty as investigated by Asch.**
- **Conformity to social roles as investigated by Zimbardo**
- **Explanations for obedience: agentic state and legitimacy of authority, and situational variables affecting obedience including proximity and location, as investigated by Milgram, and uniform. Dispositional explanation for obedience: the Authoritarian Personality.**
- **Explanations of resistance to social influence, including social support and locus of control.**
- **Minority influence including reference to consistency, commitment and flexibility.**
- **The role of social influence processes in social change**



SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Conformity

Types of Conformity

Internalisation

Going along with others as their point of view is consistent with yours. **Private** and **public** acceptance of group's opinion.

Compliance

Going along with others to gain approval/avoid disapproval. Little or **no private** attitude change.

Identification

We identify with a group, so want to be part of it. We **publicly** change our behaviour/opinions to be part of it, even if privately we disagreed. It is often temporary.

Explanations for Conformity

Normative

You conform as you want to be liked or respected by the group and because of the desire to '**fit in**'.

Informational

You conform as you believe the group has **superior knowledge** to you and is therefore 'right'.

Evaluation for Normative

Asch (1951): When answers were written down, conformity dropped to 12.5%

Schultz et al. (2008): 25% reduction in need for fresh towels when told 75% of guests reuse.

Evaluation for Informational

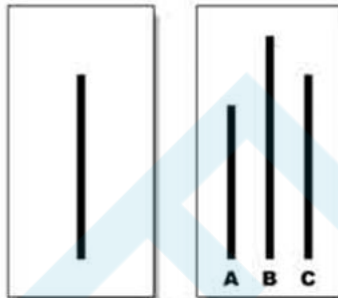
Lucas et al. (2006): Greater conformity to incorrect maths answers when problems were difficult.



SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Conformity

Asch's Study (1951)



Aim

To investigate the effects of conformity to a majority, when the task is unambiguous.

Procedure

- 123 male undergraduates from 3 US colleges
- One naïve pp and a group of 6-8 confederates
- Naïve pp sat last or second to last
- Shown 2 white cards - One with a single line
- The other with three lines of various lengths (2 of them were VERY different)
- Asked to select the line that is the same length
- 12/18 trials confederates gave incorrect answers (Critical Trials)

Findings

Control Trials

In ordinary circumstances people made mistakes **1%** of the time

Critical Trials

Pp's gave incorrect answers **36.8%** of the time. **75%** conformed at least once

Conclusion

Asch showed convincingly that group pressures to conform to a majority are much stronger than been thought previously.



SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Conformity

Variations of Asch (1951)

Group Size

With 1 confederate conformity was 3% on critical trials, 2 confederates was 12.8% and 32% for 3 confederates. Conformity is highest when the majority is only 3.

Task Difficulty

If the task is made more ambiguous then conformity increases. Probably due to informational social influence.

Unanimity

When a confederate gives the correct answer conformity dropped to 5%. If they gave a different incorrect answer to the majority, it dropped to 9%.

Evaluation of Asch (1951)

Ethics

Participants were deliberately deceived as they were told it was a vision test. However, the study would have lacked validity if the aim was known.

Some felt stressed and underwent psychological harm although Asch argued that he interviewed them after to overcome this.

Ethnocentric

Perrin & Spencer (1980) replicated with British students and only 1 in 396 conformed.

Although this was in the 1980's. Arguably, conformity in society has lessened over time.

Sample

A bias sample of 50 American students was used. We cannot generalise to other cultures or to women and so it lacks population validity.



SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Conformity

Zimbardo's Study (1973)

Aim

To see whether people would conform to the social role of a prison guard or a prisoner, when placed in a mock prison environment and to test the dispositional explanation of conformity.

Procedure

- 21 healthy male volunteers
- Randomly allocated to 'prisoner' or 'guard' and local police were recruited to make arrests
- Participants were blindfolded and taken to the mock prison at Stanford University, California
- Given uniforms and numbers instead of names
- The guards wore khaki shirts and trousers, dark glasses and carried wooden batons
- The guards were allowed to make up the rules

Findings

Guards

They behaved in a brutal and sadistic manner, apparently enjoying it. The prisoners were taunted with insults generally dehumanised. Guards had undergone deindividuation, the decreased sense of self-awareness that can occur in groups or crowds.

Prisoners

The prisoners rebelled, ripped their uniforms and swore at the guards. Some prisoners exhibited passive behaviour, depression, crying and anxiety. The study was meant to last two weeks but was stopped after only 6 days.

Conclusion

The study rejects the dispositional hypothesis of conformity. People will readily conform to the social roles they are expected to play in certain situations (situational explanation).



SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Conformity

Evaluation of Zimbardo (1951)

Replication

Reicher and Haslam (2006) replicated Zimbardo's study in the UK. The participants did not conform to social roles, guards refused to impose their authority and prisoners took control of the prison. Conformity to social roles may not be automatic and the research can only be understood in the social and cultural context that it takes place in.

Individual Differences

The guards did not all act the same. Only 1/3 guards behaved brutally and 1/3 applied rules fairly, the rest helped the prisoners

Ethics

Zimbardo is criticised for not protecting participants from harm. Five had to leave the experiment early due to distress, although he did debrief them after.





SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Obedience

Milgram's Study (1963)

Aim

To test whether ordinary Americans would obey an unjust order and inflict pain on another person because they were instructed to do so by **an authority figure**.

Procedure

- **40** American males aged between **20-50** who responded to an advert in the New Haven newspaper for an experiment into memory & learning. They were paid **\$4.50** for participating
- Greeted by **two confederates**, one was the experimenter in a white lab coat. The other played the role of the 'learner'.
- Participant was allocated the teacher role and sat in front of a shock generator in an adjoining room. It ranged from **15v** to **450v** with labels such as 'severe shock'.
- The learner had to respond to a set of word pairs. Each time he gave a wrong answer the teacher had to **shock the learner**, increasing by **15v** each time. Any nonresponse was treated as a wrong answer.
- The learner deliberately gave **3** wrong answers to every correct **1** and made no comment/protest until **300v**. He shouts at **315v** but made no further noise after this.
- There were **4 main prods**: 'Please continue', 'The experiment requires that you continue', 'It is absolutely essential that you continue' and 'You have no other choice, you must go on'

Findings

All continued to **300v** and **5** refused to continue after this point. **26 (65%)** continued to **450v**

Conclusion

Suggests a **situational** not a dispositional explanation for obedience. Most people would obey authority in these situations.



SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Obedience

Evaluation of Milgram (1963)

Ecological Validity

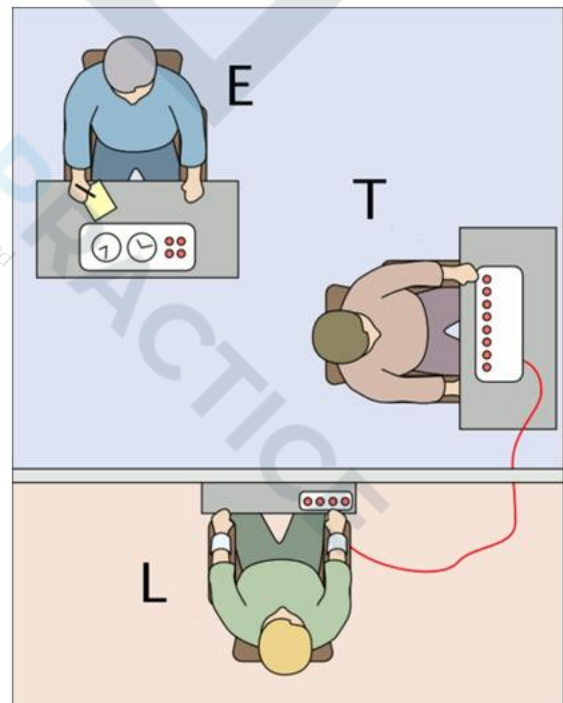
Some have criticised Milgram by saying his study did not reflect a real-life situation. However, Hofling (1966) repeated the study in a real life setting in a hospital and got similar results. This shows obedience is high in real life also (21 out of 22 nurses gave a lethal dose of drug when ordered to do so by a doctor).

Ethics

Milgram deceived participants as to the true aim of the study and made them feel as if they could not withdraw, due to the use of the prods. Many participants showed obvious signs of stress and guilt. Milgram stated that 83.7% of participants were happy to have taken part when asked during the debriefing.

Internal Validity

Orne and Holland argue that the participants did not believe the experiment was real. Some suggest they only shocked the learner as they were getting paid.





SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Obedience

Explanations for Obedience

Agentic State

When you obey orders of an authority figure and do not feel responsible for their actions. This is because you have shifted from an autonomous state to an agentic state.

Proximity

When the learner is in the same room the obedience drops. If the authority figure gives instructions by phone then obedience also drops.

Location

Less credible locations e.g. a run down office block rather than a prestigious university, causes obedience to reduce.

Uniform

The lab coat indicates status. When the experimenter did not wear one, obedience dropped.

Legitimacy of Authority

Uniform and location demonstrate legitimate authority. People will obey when the person giving the orders seems to have authority due to these factors or perceived status in society.



SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Obedience

Variations of Milgram % of Obedience

Agentic Shift	Someone else administered the shock	92.5%
Location & Legitimate Authority	Conducted in a run down office block	48%
Proximity	Teacher and learner were in the same room	40%
Proximity	Experimenter gave instructions over the phone	21%
Uniform & Legitimate Authority	The experiment was replaced by an ordinary man in plain clothes	20%

Dispositional Explanation of Obedience

Authoritarian Personality

Adorno et al. (1950) created the F Scale to measure the authoritarian personality in 2000 white middle class Americans. Those who scored highly identified with 'strong' people and were contemptuous of the 'weak'

They showed respect to authority with fixed distinct stereotypes about others. This was positively correlated with prejudice towards others. They are more likely to obey authority figures.



SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Resistance to Social Influence

Social Support

Those with social support can be more confident and will not fear rejection or ridicule. This means they are more likely to resist conformity and remain independent.

Conformity

When a confederate gave a correct answer in Asch's study the conformity dropped to 5%

Obedience

When the participant was paired with two other teachers, (confederates) who refused to go on, the number of people who went to 450v dropped to 10%

Locus of Control

LOC refers to a person's perception of personal control over their own behaviour. It is measured along a dimension of 'high internal' to 'high external'. **High internals** are active seekers of information that is useful to them, so rely less on the opinions of others. They take responsibility for their own actions and base decisions on their own beliefs and so **resist pressures** from others. High internals are more self confident and do not need social approval.

Oliner & Oliner (1998) found that those who resisted orders in Nazi Germany were more likely to have a high internal locus of control.



SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Minority Influence

How do Minorities Influence Others?

Consistency

If a minority continues to state the same thing over a period of time, then they are more likely to influence others. **Moscovici (1969)** found that if confederates consistently called a slide green, when it was blue, then participants agreed 8.2% of the time in comparison to 1.25% when they were inconsistent.

Commitment

When a minority shows commitment, it demonstrates confidence and courage and at a great cost to them. This can persuade others to take their viewpoint.

Flexibility

A rigid minority that refuses to compromise risks being perceived as narrow minded. However, a minority that is too flexible could be perceived as inconsistent. They must adapt their opinions and accept counter-arguments in order to persuade others.





SOCIAL INFLUENCE

Social Change

Processes Leading to Social Change

- 1. Drawing attention:** Using marches, protests etc. to draw attention to the issue
- 2. Consistency:** Be consistent in the message and over time
- 3. Deeper Processing:** People start to think about the minority opinion
- 4. Augmentation Principle:** Willing to take risks to show commitment
- 5. Snowball Effect:** The group slowly gains more authority and grows in number – becoming the majority and causing conformity and obedience to occur.
- 6. Social Cryptoamnesia:** Many have no memory of how the changes came about

Example of Social Change

Suffragettes

- 1. Educational, political and militant tactics**
- 2. Continued for 15 years, even if imprisoned**
- 3. Conflict created in minds after being exposed to suffragette views**
- 4. Willing to suffer – hunger strikes, imprisonment**
- 5. Group membership encouraged others to join**
- 6. Now we do not remember how women's votes came about or the events leading up to it**