

Types of Conformity

A type of social influence where we choose to go along with the majority.

- Compliance → conforming to fit in and be accepted - public not private, only temporary.
- Internalisation → accepting the behaviour/belief as your own - public and private, permanent change.
- Identification → conforming due to seeing group as role models/want to be like them, temporary change.

Explanations of Conformity

Normative Social Influence: To be accepted or liked by a group due to group pressure, leads to compliance.

- ✓ Supported by Garandeu and Cillesen, Asch.

Informational Social Influence: Conforming to be 'right' or to gain knowledge, leads to internalisation.

- ✓ Supported by Fein, Wittenbrick and Henley.
- ✗ Conformity may be due to both NSI and ISI - dual process model.
- ✗ Dispositional factors (e.g. personality) could be more influential.

Asch (1956) – Conformity

- 123 male ppts in groups of 7 asked to judge a line task, all but one were confederates, 12/18 tasks the confederates were told to give false answers.
- On the 12 trials, 37% of total responses were conforming, 75% conformed at least once.
- When interviewed most ppts admitted that they had conformed to avoid disapproval but knew the correct answer (compliance).

Variations

- Group size → 3 or more pps saw conformity rise to over 30% (due to group pressure).
- Unanimity → unanimity (agreement) leads to high conformity, breaking unanimity by 1 confederate disagreeing decreases conformity to 5%.
- Task difficulty → As difficulty of the task increased, conformity increased (due to ISI).
- ✗ Difficult to generalise conformity findings due to limited sample (gender/students), lacks ecological validity due to artificial setting and task, findings may lack temporal validity as we may be less conforming (more independent) today. May be not be generalisable to other cultures - collectivist may be more conforming.

Resistance to Social Influence

Social support → having an 'ally' who does not conform can increase non-conformity, disobedient role models can reduce obedience.

- ✓ Supported by Milgram - obedience dropped to 10% when in the presence of disobedient confederates and Asch - conformity dropped to 5.5% when in the presence of a non-conforming confederate
- ✓ Supported by Gamson - group pressure led to resisting obedience

Locus of control → people with an internal locus are likely to resist social influence as they are independent and take responsibility for their own actions (less likely to be influenced by others)

- ✓ Supported by Shute - people with an internal locus were less likely to conform to drug taking
- ✗ Resistance to social influence could be influenced by situational factors such as non-uniform, location etc.

Zimbardo (1973) – Conformity to Social Roles

- 24 male volunteers assigned the role of 'guard' or 'prisoner' in a mock prison at Stanford University. Zimbardo was the prison warden, all pps were given uniform and props.
- Guards started to create their own punishments and volunteered to work longer hours. Prisoners started to riot, become passive and followed orders, 5 prisoners had to be released after 2 days and the study was terminated on day 6. Suggested conformity to social roles was strong.
- ✗ Findings may lack ecological validity (setting did not reflect some aspects of real prisons), zimbardo had a dual role of psychologist and prison superintendent (lacked objectivity, may have influenced findings), issues with ethics (right to withdraw and psychological harm), findings have not been replicated (e.g. BBC prison study).

Milgram (1963) – Obedience

- 40 male PPs. 2 confederates (experimenter and learner). The participant was always the teacher who was ordered to punish the learner for incorrect answers via electric shocks. If the teacher stopped, the experimenter used 'prods' to encourage them.
- 65% obeyed to full 450-volts, all obeyed to 300v - suggests there is high obedience to authority.

Variations

- Proximity → in the same room as learner (40% obeyed) / Moving the learner's hand onto a plate (30% obeyed) / Phone instructions (21% obeyed).
- Location → Laboratory (65%) / Rundown office (48% obeyed to 450v).
- Uniform → obedience higher when person giving orders was in a lab coat than 'normal' clothes.
- ✗ Findings may lack mundane realism (due to artificial lab setting) - may not reflect obedience in the real world, findings may not be generalisable (due to volunteer sample and only being men), ethical issues (deception, right to withdraw, psychological harm) - but could be justified to preserve validity and pps not regretting taking part.

Minority Influence

Consistency (synchronic and diachronic), commitment (making sacrifices, the augmentation principle), flexibility (being willing to compromise).

- ✓ Consistency supported by Moscovici - a consistent minority led more pps to say the wrong answer on a blue/green slide task.
- ✓ Flexibility supported by Nemeth - a flexible minority led to the majority agreeing with them on the outcome of a mock jury trial.
- ✓ Evidence of these characteristics in real life examples e.g. suffragettes.

Minority Influence and Social Change

- Draw attention to the issue → be consistent → majority are forced to examine message → augmentation principle (suffering) → the snowball effect → social cryptomnesia (use suffragettes as example).
- NSI and social change → society conforms to what they perceive to be the 'new norm' e.g. 'most people don't drink and drive'.
- ISI and social change → expose society to facts about behaviour (e.g. smoking) so they gain new knowledge.
- Obedience and social change → use influential role models to tell influence society to change behaviour.

Social-psychological Explanations of Obedience

This is known as setting.

Agentic State → attributing responsibility to someone else (authority figure), experience 'agentic shift' from autonomous to agentic state Eg. following orders of experimenter in Milgram's study.

- ✗ But not all obey - cannot all enter agentic state.

Legitimate Authority → obey due to orders from someone in a position of power, legitimacy is influenced by the setting the order takes place in (e.g. a university) and the context of the order given (e.g. to help society).

- ✓ Supported by Bickman - ppts more likely to obey someone in uniform.

Dispositional Explanations of Obedience

This is known as personality.

Authoritarian Personality → a personality type arising from strict parenting where individuals have a strong respect for the social hierarchy and individuals above them, likely to obey those they perceive to be in authority. Measured by the f-scale.

- ✓ Supported by Elms & Milgram - obedient pps scored higher on f-scale.
- ✗ Original f-scale is flawed so findings may not be valid, findings are only correlational (difficult to establish cause and effect), unlikely to explain situations where whole populations obey, situational factors could be more important (e.g. uniform, location).