AS PSYCHOLOGY REVISION

SOCIAL INFLUENCE
3.1.1 Social influence Specification

- 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, location and uniform, as investigated by Milgram.
- 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.
TYPES OF CONFORMITY

• **CONFORMITY** – is a form of social influence that results from exposure to the majority position and leads to compliance with that position. It is the tendency for people to adopt the behaviour, attitudes and values of other members of a reference group.

• **COMPLIANCE** – occurs when an individual accepts influence because they hope to achieve a favourable reaction from those around them. An attitude or behaviour is adopted not because of its content, but because of the rewards or approval associated with its adoption.
  – Only changes public view, not private
TYPES OF CONFORMITY

• **INTERNALISATION** – occurs when an individual accepts influence because the content of the attitude or behaviour proposed is consistent with their own value system (i.e. examined their own beliefs and the groups’ position; resulting in believing the group are correct)
  — Changes public and private view

• **IDENTIFICATION** – a form of influence where an individual adopts an attitude or behaviour because they want to be associated with a particular person or group
  — A mix of internalisation (accepts attitudes/behaviours of the group as right and true) and compliance (as the *purpose* of adopting them is to be accepted as a member of the group)
EXPLANATIONS FOR CONFORMITY

• NORMATIVE SOCIAL INFLUENCE – is a form of influence whereby an individual conforms with the expectations of the majority in order to gain approval or to avoid social disapproval (the need to be accepted)
  – The individual must believe they are under surveillance by the group
  – Linked to compliance

• INFORMATIONAL SOCIAL INFLUENCE – is a form of influence, which is the result of a desire to be right – looking to others (especially if the situation is ambiguous or where others are experts) as a way of gaining evidence about reality
  – Individuals don’t just comply in behaviour, but also change their behaviour in line with the group position
  – Linked to internalisation
EVALUATION OF THE TYPES OF AND EXPLANATIONS OF CONFORMITY
DIFFICULTIES IN DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN COMPLIANCE AND INTERNALISATION

• It is assumed that someone who publicly agrees with a majority but disagrees with them in private must be showing compliance
  – However, it is possible that acceptance occurred in public but dissipates later in private due to forgetting the information given by the group

• It is also assumed that someone who agrees with the group in public and in private must have internalised the views of the group
  – However, it is possible that they may have been just complying in public, but as a result of self-perception (attitude determined by interpreting the meaning of their own behaviour), they come to accept that position as their own
RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR NORMATIVE INFLUENCE

• Linkenbach and Perkins (2003) found that adolescents exposed to the simple message that the majority of their peers did not smoke were less likely to take up smoking.

• Schultz et al (2008) found that hotel guests exposed to the normative message that 75% of guests reused their towels each day reduced their own towel use by 25%.

• These studies support the claim that people shape their behaviour out of a desire to fit in with their reference group.
RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR INFORMATIONAL INFLUENCE

• Wittenbrink and Henley (1996) found that participants exposed to negative information about African Americans (which they were led to believe was the view of the majority) later reported more negative beliefs about a black individual.

• Fein et al (2007) demonstrated how judgements of candidate performance on US presidential debates could be influenced by knowledge of others’ reaction (participants saw what was supposedly the reaction of their fellow participants on screen during the debate).
  – This produced large shifts in participants’ judgements of the candidates’ performance.
NORMATIVE INFLUENCE MAY NOT BE DETECTED

• Research on conformity has led to the conclusion that normative influence has a powerful effect on the behaviour of the individual.

• Researchers have started to speculate whether individuals do actually recognise the behaviour of others as a causal factor in their own behaviour.
  
  — Nolan et al (2008) found that people believed that the behaviour of neighbours had the least impact on their own energy saving, yet results showed that it had the strongest impact.
  
  — This suggests that people rely on beliefs about what should motivate their behaviour so under-detect the impact of normative influence.
INFORMATIONAL INFLUENCE IS MODERATED BY TYPE OF TASK

- A problem for informational explanation of conformity is that features of the task moderate the impact of majority influence.
- For some judgements there are clear non-social criteria or validation which places them into the realm of physical reality:
  - E.g. deciding whether Bristol is the most highly populated city in the South West of England (it can be determined through objective means – i.e. stats etc).
- However, other judgements like deciding if Bristol is the most fun city in the South West of England cannot be made using objective criteria as it does not exist:
  - Instead, these kinds of judgements must be made on the basis of social consensus (i.e. what other people believe the case to be).
  - As a result, majorities should exert greater influence on issues of social rather than physical reality, and this is precisely what research tends to show (Laughlin, 1999).
ASCH (1956)
ASCH (1956) PROCEDURE

• 123 male American undergraduates recruited for a ‘vision test’
• In each experiment all but one were confederates
• In turn, participants and confederates were asked to state which of three lines was the same length as a stimulus line
• The real participant always answered last or second to last
• Confederates would give the same incorrect answer for 12 out of 18 trials
ASCH (1956) FINDINGS

• For the **12 critical trials**, 33% of responses given by participants were incorrect (conforming with the incorrect responses given by confederates)

• ¼ of the participants **never conformed** on any of the critical trials

• ½ of the participants **conformed on 6 or more** of the critical trials

• One in 20 of the participants **conformed on all 12** of the critical trials

• In a control trial (without the distraction of confederates giving the wrong answers), only 1% of responses given by participants were incorrect
• When Asch interviewed his participants afterwards he found that the majority of participants who conformed, had continued privately to trust their own perceptions and judgements (i.e. knew which line was the same length), but changed their public behaviour by giving the incorrect answers to avoid disapproval from other group members (i.e. they showed compliance)
VARIABLES AFFECTING CONFORMITY
GROUP SIZE

• Asch found that there was very little conformity when the majority was just one or two confederates.

• However, under the pressure of a majority of three confederates, the proportion of conforming responses jumped up to about 30%.

• Further increases in size of the majority did not increase this level of conformity substantially, indicating that the size of the majority is important but only up to a point.
GROUP SIZE

• Campbell and Fairey (1989) suggest that group size may have a different effect depending on the type of judgement being made and the motivation of the individual.

• Where there is no objectively correct answer (e.g. musical preferences) and the individual is concerned about “fitting in”, then the larger the majority the more likely they are to be swayed.

• However, **when there is a correct response and the individual is concerned about being correct, then the views of just one or two others will usually be sufficient**.
THE UNANIMITY OF THE MAJORITY

• In Asch’s original study, the confederates unanimously gave the same wrong answer.

• When the participant was given the support of either another participant or a confederate who had been instructed to give the right answers throughout, conformity levels dropped significantly, reducing the percentage of wrong answers from 33% to just 5.5%.
THE UNANIMITY OF THE MAJORITY

• In another condition a lone “dissenter”; also a confederate, gave an answer that was different to the majority and different from the true answer
  – Conformity rates dropped to 9%, which was nearly as big a fall as when the dissenter provided support for the real participant by giving the same answer

• This led Asch to conclude that it was breaking in the group’s unanimous position that was the major factor in conformity reductions
THE DIFFICULTY OF THE TASK

• In one variation, Asch made the differences between the line lengths much smaller (correct answer becoming less obvious)

• Within these conditions, the level of conformity increased

• Lucas et al (2006) investigated this relationship a little further
  – They found that the influence of task difficulty is weakened by the self-efficacy (or self-belief) of the individual
THE DIFFICULTY OF THE TASK

• When exposed to Maths problems in an Asch-type task, high self-efficacy participants (participants who are confident in their own abilities) remained more independent than low self-efficacy participants, even under conditions of high task difficulty.

• This shows that situational differences (task difficulty) and individual differences (self-efficacy) are both important in determining conformity.
EVALUATION OF VARIABLES AFFECTING CONFORMITY
ASCH’S RESEARCH MAY BE A “CHILD OF IT’S TIME”

• It is possible that Asch’s findings are unique due to the time in US history that it took place (when conformity was high)

• In 1956, the US was in the grip of McCarthyism (a strong anti-Communist period when people were scared to go against the majority and so more likely to conform)

• Perrin and Spencer attempted to repeat Asch’s study in the UK in the 1980s using science and engineering students
  – In their initial study there was only one conforming response out of a total of 396 trials where a majority unanimously gave the same wrong answer
  – In a subsequent study, they used youths on probation as participants and probation officers as the confederates
    • Here they found similar levels of conformity to those found in Asch’s study in the 1950s
    • This confirmed that conformity is more likely if the perceived costs of not conforming are high (Perrin and Spencer, 1980), which would have been the case during the McCarthy era in the US
PROBLEMS WITH DETERMINING THE EFFECT OF GROUP SIZE

• Bond (2005) suggests a limitation of research in conformity is that studies have used only a limited range of majority sizes.

• Investigators were quick to accept Asch’s conclusion that the majority size of three was a sufficient number for maximal influence and therefore most subsequent studies using the Asch procedure have used three as the majority size.

• Bond points out that no studies other than Asch have used a majority size greater than nine, and in other studies of conformity the range of majority sizes used is much narrower, usually between two and four.
  – This means we know very little about the effect of larger majority sizes on conformity levels.
INDEPENDENT BEHAVIOUR RATHER THAN CONFORMITY

• Only about one-third of the trials (with Asch), where the majority unanimous gave the same wrong answer, produced a conforming response.

• So in two-thirds of these trials the participants stuck to their original judgement despite being faced with an overwhelming majority expressing a totally different view.

• Asch believed that rather than showing human beings to be overly conformist, his study demonstrated a commendable tendency for participants to stick to what they believed to be the correct judgement, i.e. to show independent behaviour.
UNCONVINCING CONFEDERATES?

• A problem for the confederates in Asch’s study is that it would have been difficult for them to act convincingly when giving the wrong answer, something that would pose serious problems for the validity of the study.

• However, Mori and Arai (2010) overcame the confederate problem by using a technique where participants wore glasses with special polarising filters:
  – Three participants in each group wore identical glasses and a fourth wore a different set with a different filter (so this participant viewed the same stimuli differently).
  – This had the effect of causing them to judge that a different comparison line matched the standard line.
  – For female participants, the results closely matched those of the original Asch study, but not for male participants.
  – This suggests that the confederates in the original study had acted convincingly.
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN CONFORMITY

• Research suggests that there are important cultural differences in conformity and so we can expect different results depending on the culture in which the study takes place

• Smith et al (2006) analysed the results of Asch-type studies across a number of different cultures
  – The average conformity rate across the different cultures was 31.2%
  – The average conformity rate for individualist cultures (e.g. Europe and US) was about 25%
  – The average conformity rate for collectivist cultures in Africa, Asia and South America was 37%

• Markus and Kitayama (1991) suggest that a higher level of conformity arises in collectivist cultures because it is viewed more favourably, as a form of “social glue” that binds communities together
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A mock prison was set up in the basement of the psychology department at Stanford University in California.

Male student volunteers were screened (psychologically and physiologically) and the 24 most stable were randomly assigned to be the role of a “prisoner” or a “guard”.

Prisoners were unexpectedly arrested at home and put through a delousing procedure when they got to the “prison”, given a prison uniform and assigned an ID number.

- The guards referred to the prisoners only by these numbers throughout the study.

Prisoners were allowed three meals and three supervised toilet trips a day and two visits per week.

The guards were given uniforms, clubs, whistles and wore reflective sunglasses to prevent eye contact.

Zimbardo took the role of Prison Superintendent.

The study was planned to last for two weeks.
**STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT - FINDINGS**

- Over the first few days the guards became more abusive toward the prisoners
  - They woke them in the night, forced them to clean the toilets with their bare hands and made them carry out other degrading activities
- Some guards were so enthusiastic in their role they volunteered to do extra hours without pay
- The participants appeared at times to forget that this was only a psychological study
- Even when they were unaware of being watched, they still conformed to their role of guard or prisoner
- One prisoner asked for parole rather than to withdraw from the study
STANFORD PRISON EXPERIMENT - FINDINGS

• Five prisoners had to be released early due to extreme reactions (e.g. crying, anxiety and rage)
  – These had started to form after just two days
• This study was terminated after just six days, following the intervention of a postgraduate student Christina Maslach (who became Zimbardo’s wife)
  – She reminded the researchers that this was a psychological study and therefore did not justify the abuse being given out to the participants
• This study demonstrated that both guards and prisoners conformed to their social roles
• The guards became increasingly cruel and sadistic and the prisoners became increasingly passive and accepting of their predicament
The BBC study randomly assigned men to the role of guard or prisoner and examined their behaviour within a specially created “prison”

Fifteen male participants were divided into five groups of three people who were as closely matched as possible on key personality variables

- From each group of three, one person was randomly chosen to be a guard and the other two were prisoners
- This study was run for eight days
THE BBC PRISON STUDY - FINDINGS

• Participants did not conform automatically to their assigned role as had happened in the SPE
• Over the course of the study, the prisoners increasingly identified as a group and worked collectively to challenge the authority of the guards and establish a more democratic set of social relations within the prison
• The guards also failed to identify with their role, which made them reluctant to impose their authority on the prisoners
• This led to a shift of power and the collapse of the prisoner-guards system
EVALUATION OF CONFORMITY TO SOCIAL ROLES
Zimbardo believed that the guards’ drift into sadistic behaviour was an automatic consequence of them embracing their role, which suppressed their ability to engage with the fact that what they were doing was wrong.

Guard behaviour ranged from being fully sadistic to being “good guards” (those that did not degrade or harass the prisoners, some even did small favours for them).

Haslam and Reicher (2012) argue that this shows that the guards chose how to behave, rather than blindly conforming to their social roles.
Banuazizi and Movahedi (1975) argued that the behaviour of Zimbardo’s guards and prisoners was not due to their response to a prison environment, but it was a response to powerful demand characteristics in the experiment – This is where the characteristics of a study let the participants guess what experiments expect or want them to behave like.

Banuazizi and Movahedi presented some of the details of the SPE to a large sample of students who had never heard of the study before – The vast majority of students correctly guessed the aims of the experiment and that the guards would act in a hostile, domineering way and the prisoners would react in a passive way.
WERE THESE STUDIES ETHICAL?

• Zimbardo’s study was considered ethical because it followed the guidelines of the Stanford University ethics committee that had approved it

• **There was no deception** as all participants were told in advance that many of their usual rights would be suspended

• However, Zimbardo acknowledges that **maybe the study should have been stopped earlier as so many of the participants were experiencing emotional distress**

• He tried to make amends for this by **carrying out debriefing sessions for several years afterwards** and concluded that there were no lasting negative effects

• Reicher and Haslam’s study used the same basic set-up as Zimbardo, but took greater steps to minimise the potential harm to their participants

• Their intention was to create a situation that was harsh and testing, but not harmful
THE SPE AND ITS RELEVANCE TO ABU GHRAIB

• Zimbardo argues that the same conformity to social role effect that was evident in the SPE was also present in Abu Ghraib (military prison in Iraq where Iraqi prisoners were abused and tortured by US soldiers in 2003 and 2004)

• Zimbardo believed that the guards who committed the abuses were the victims of situational factors that made abuse more likely

• Zimbardo suggests that situational factors like lack of training, unrelenting boredom and no accountability to higher authority were present in both the SPE and Abu Ghraib

• These, combined with an opportunity to misuse the power associated with the assigned role of “guard”, led to the prisoner abuses in both situations
WHAT DID WE LEARN FROM THESE STUDIES?

• Zimbardo’s conclusion from the SPE was that people descend into tyranny/oppression because they conform unthinkingly to the roles that authorities prescribe **without** the need for specific orders.

• The brutality of the guards was a natural consequence of being allocated the role of “guard” and asserting the power associated with that role.

• The results of the BBC prison study suggest that the way in which members of strong groups behave depends upon the norms and values associated with their specific social identity.
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AGENTIC STATE
THE AGENTIC STATE

• Usually an individual sees themselves as responsible for their own actions

• When we are obedient we see ourselves as not having responsibility for our actions
  – This is because we attribute the responsibility to someone else (especially in authority)

• Milgram referred to the process of moving from an autonomous state (where a person sees themselves as being responsible for their actions) to an agentic state (where a person sees themselves as an agent for carrying out the wishes of an authority figure); as an 'agentic shift'
  – Participants in Milgram’s study commented that they “wouldn’t have done it by myself. I was just doing what I was told”

• A consequence of this is that the individual feels responsible to follow orders (from authority) but feels no responsibility for their actions
SELF IMAGE AND THE AGENTIC STATE

• People adopt agentic shift to maintain positive self image
• Participants may be tempted to shock the learner, but want to refrain as it may create a negative self-image
• Once participants have moved into agentic state this evaluative concern is no longer relevant
• The action is no longer their responsibility, does not reflect their own self-image
• Actions under the agentic state are virtually guilt free (according to the participant), however inhumane they might be
BINDING FACTORS

• Social etiquette regulates our behaviour in a social setting
• In order to remove themselves from the experiment the participants must breach the commitment that has already been made
• They fear that they will appear rude or arrogant and so do not take this decision lightly (which leads to the participants binding into obedience)
EVALUATION OF AGENTIC STATE
AGENTIC STATE EXPLAINED AND REAL LIFE OBEDIENCE

• Milgram claimed that people shift back and forth between the autonomous state and the agentic state.

• However, this idea of rapidly shifting states fails to explain the very gradual and irreversible transition in Lifton’s findings.

• Lifton (1986) found that German doctors working in Auschwitz had changed from caring about the welfare of their patients to people capable of murdering innocent and helpless people.

• Staub (1989) suggests that rather than agentic shift being responsible for the transition found in many Holocaust perpetrators, it is the experience of carrying out acts of evil over a long time which changed the individuals' thoughts and behaviour.
AGENTIC STATE OR JUST PLAIN CRUEL?

- Milgram detected signs of cruelty among his participants that used the experiment to express their sadistic impulses.
- In the SPE within the first few days the guards inflicted rapidly escalating cruelty on increasingly submissive prisoners despite there being no authority figure ordering them.
- These studies expose unflattering aspects of human nature.
THE AGENTIC STATE AS LOSS OF PERSONAL CONTROL

• Fennis and Aarts (2012) suggest that the agentic shift may also occur in other social influences too.

• Agentic shift is caused by the individual experiencing a lack of personal control.
  – This may lead to them showing an increased acceptance of external sources of control.

• They found that a reduction in personal control resulted not only in greater obedience to authority, but also in bystander apathy (tendency to remain passive when others do not respond in an emergency), and greater compliance with behavioural requests.
LEGITIMACY OF AUTHORITY
The first condition needed for a person to shift to the agentic state is the perception of legitimate authority (i.e. someone who is perceived to be in a position of social control, within a situation).

Milgram (1974) believed that there is a shared expectation among people that many situations do ordinarily have a socially controlling figure.

Therefore, the power of a legitimate authority stems from their perceived position in a social situation; not from any personal characteristic.

In Milgram’s study the participant enters the lab with an expectation that someone to be in charge (the experimenter filled this role through introductory remarks).

With this and the language and appearance of the experimenter he earned the role of authority without challenge.
THE DEFINITION OF THE SITUATION

- People have a tendency to believe definitions of a situation provided by a legitimate authority.
- Even though they are the ones carrying out the actions; they allow the authority figure to define its meaning.
- On one hand the apparent suffering of the learner convinces them to quit, but on the other, they feel committed to the experimenter (due to being a legitimate authority) who orders them to continue, reassuring the participant that the learner is fine and not in any danger.
LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY REQUIRES AN INSTITUTION

• If an authority figure’s commands are of a potentially harmful, then for them to be perceived as legitimate they must occur within some sort of institutional structure (i.e. the military)

• However, Milgram's study shows that it does not have to be a particularly distinguished institution for obedience to occur (i.e. run-down office block still produced high levels of obedience in Milgram’s variation of the original study)

• It is possible that the category of institution, rather than its relative status within that category, that causes obedience
  – Participants may well consider one laboratory to be as competent as another, provided it is a scientific laboratory
EVALUATION OF LEGITIMACY OF AUTHORITY
THE LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY EXPLAINED AND REAL LIFE OBEDIENCE

• Although there are positive consequences of obedience to legitimate authority, legitimacy can serve as a basis for justifying the harm of others.

• If people authorise another person to make judgements for them about what is appropriate conduct, they no longer feel that their own moral values are relevant to their conduct.

  – So when directed by a legitimate authority figure to engage in immoral actions, people are alarmingly willing to do so.

• Extreme obedience is used in military training and is reinforced by the structure of military authority.
OBEDIENCE IN THE COCKPIT - A TEST OF LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY

• Tarnow (2000) studied aviation accidents, reviewing serious aircraft accidents in the US between 1978-1990 where a flight voice recorder (the “black box”) was available; and where flight crew actions were a contributing factor in the crash

• Tarnow found excessive dependence on the captain’s authority and expertise
  – One second officer claimed he said nothing, even though he noticed the captain taking a risky approach; because he assumed the captain knew what he was doing
  – It was found that a ‘lack of monitoring' errors in 19 of the 37 accidents investigated
MILGRAM

SITUATIONAL VARIABLES AFFECTING OBEDIENCE
MILGRAM - PROCEDURE

- There were 40 participants at a time over a series of conditions, each varying some aspect of the situation to calculate its effect on obedience.
- Participants were told it was a study of how punishment affects learning.
- There were two confederates:
  - An experimenter
  - A 47-year-old man who was introduced as another volunteer.
- The two participants drew lots to see who would be the “teacher” and who would be the “learner”:
  - This was rigged so that the real participant would be the teacher.
MILGRAM - PROCEDURE

• The teacher had to test the learners on his ability to remember word pairs
• Every time the learner got a question wrong, the teacher had to administer increasingly strong electric shocks
  – Starting at 15 volts and then continuing to increase 15 volts at a time until it reached 450 volts
• The learner was sat in another room, gave mainly wrong answers and received “fake” shocks
• If the “teacher” asked to stop at any point, the experimenter had a series of “prods” to repeat
  – Saying “it is absolutely essential that you continue”
  – “You have no other choice, you must go on”
• Before the study, Milgram asked psychiatrists, college students and colleagues to predict how long participants would go before refusing to continue
  – They consistently predicted that few participants would go beyond 150 volts and only 1 in 1,000 would administer the full 450 volts
• However, 26 of the 40 participants (65%) continued to the maximum shock level (450 volts)
• This was despite the shock generator being labelled “Danger: severe shock” at 420 volts and “XXX” at 450 volts
• All participants went to 300 volts with only five (12.5%) stopping there; the point at which the learner first objected to the study
SITUATIONAL FACTORS IN OBEDIENCE – PROXIMITY

• In the **PROXIMITY** study, both teacher and learner were seated in the same room
• Obedience fell to 40% as the teacher was now able to experience the learner’s pain more directly
• In another more severe variation the teacher had to force the learner’s hand onto a shock plate (this was known as the **TOUCH PROXIMITY** condition) – obedience here fell to 30%
• The proximity of the experimenter also had an impact on obedience rates
• In the **EXPERIMENTER ABSENT** study, instructions were given to the participants by the experimenter who then left the room but gave orders over the phone
  – This led to only 21% continuing to the maximum shock level
  – Some participants repeatedly gave the weakest shock level despite telling the experimenter they were following the correct procedure
The studies were conducted in the psychology laboratory at Yale University in the US.

Several participants remarked that the location of the study gave them confidence in the integrity/honesty of the people involved.

- Many stated that they would not have shocked the learner if the study had been carried out elsewhere.

Due to this, Milgram moved his study to a run-down office in Bridgeport in Connecticut, which no obvious connections with Yale University.

Obedience rates did drop slightly but not significantly (48% of the participants delivered the 450 volt maximum shock).
Research has shown that uniforms can have a powerful impact on obedience. They are easily recognisable and convey power and authority. Bushman (1988) carried out a study where a female researcher, dressed either in a “police-style” uniform, as a business executive or as a beggar. She stopped people in the street and told them to give change to a male researcher for an expired parking meter.

The results showed that:
- 72% people obeyed when she was in uniform
- 48% when she was dressed as an executive
- 52% when she was dressed as a beggar

When interviewed afterwards, people claimed they had obeyed the woman in uniform because she appeared to have authority.
EVALUATION OF SITUATIONAL FACTORS IN OBEDIENCE
ETHICAL ISSUES

- Milgram deceived his participants by telling them they were in a study on the effects of punishment on learning, rather than telling them the true purpose of the study—This made it impossible for participants to make an informed decision before giving their consent to participate

- Milgram also claimed that participants were free to leave at any time, but the experimenter made it difficult for participants to leave (they felt they had no choice about continuing)
INTERNAL VALIDITY: A LACK OF REALISM

• In Milgram’s study the learner was crying out in pain, but the experimenter remained cool and distant
  – This led participants to suppose that the “victim” could not really be suffering any real harm
  – Many of Milgram’s participants had been sceptical at the time about whether the shocks were real (Perry, 2012)

• Murata (one of Milgram’s assistants) found that believers (participants that believed shocks were real) were more likely to disobey the experimenter and give only low intensity shocks
A commonly held assumption is that women are more susceptible to social influence than men (Eagly, 1978) – Therefore, we might expect to find gender differences in obedience.

Milgram did have one condition in which the participants were female – The rate of obedience was the same for males and females.

Blass (1999) found no evidence of any gender differences in obedience.
EXTERNAL VALIDITY: THE OBEDIENCE ALIBI

- Mandel (1998) claims that Milgram’s conclusions about the situational determinants of obedience are not displayed by real-life events
  - Shown on 13th July 1942 in Poland. Major Wilhelm Trapp made an offer to his men that anyone who “didn’t feel up to” the duty of killing Jews could be assigned other duties
  - Even though there was close proximity with their victims and the presence of disobedient others (things that Milgram showed would lead to disobedience); only a small minority took up Trapp’s offer
HISTORICAL VALIDITY: WOULD THE SAME THING HAPPEN TODAY?

• Blass (1999) carried out a statistical analysis of all Milgram’s obedience experiments and studies conducted by other researchers between 1961 and 1985
  – The later studies found no more or less obedience than the ones conducted earlier

• Burger (2009) found levels of obedience almost identical to those found by Milgram 46 years earlier
  – Milgram’s findings still appear as much today as they did back in the early 1960s
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THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY

THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY

• The definition for the Authoritarian Personality is:
  – “A distinct personality pattern characterised by strict adherence to conventional values and a belief in absolute obedience or submission to authority”

THE F SCALE

• The definition for the F Scale is:
  – “Also known as the ‘California F scale’ or the ‘Fascism scale’, the F scale was developed in California in 1947 as a measure of authoritarian traits or tendencies”
THE F SCALE

• **Individuals with Authoritarian Personality** were rigid thinkers who obeyed authority, saw the world as black and white, and enforced strict adherence to social rules and hierarchies.

• Adorno et al found that people who scored high on the F Scale tended to have been raised by parents who used an authoritarian parenting style (including physical punishment).
  
  – **Children would then grow up assuming this system** was the expected norm in society.

  – **These children would also acquire the same authoritarian attitudes** through a process of learning and imitation.
RIGHT-WING AUTHORITARIANISM (RWA)

• The **definition for the RWA** is:
  – “A cluster of personality variables that are associated with a “right-wing” attitude to life”

• Altemeyer (1981) said that **high-RWA people possess three important personality characteristics where they are more inclined to be obedient:**
  – **Conventionalism** – an adherence to conventional norms and values
  – **Authoritarian Aggression** – aggressive feelings toward people who violate these norms
  – **Authoritarian Submission** – uncritical submission to legitimate authorities

• **Altemeyer** tested the relationship between RWA and obedience (participants were ordered to give themselves increasing level of shock when they made mistakes on a learning task)
  – **There was a significant correlation between RWA scores and the level of shocks that they were willing to give themselves**

• There was also a large red button with a sign that read “Do not push this button unless you are instructed to do so”
  – When the experiment was over, all participants were asked to push the red button to administer an extra large shock as a punishment for not trying
  – **The vast majority of participants did as they were told without question which was not affected by the level of RWA**
ELMS AND MILGRAM (1966)

PROCEDURE

• This was a follow-up study to the one by Milgram
• Participants completed Milgram’s experiment two months before
• There were 20 “obedient” participants (those who continued to the final shock level) and 20 “defiant” participants (those who refused to continue at some point)
• Each participant completed the MMPI (*Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory*) scale (measuring a range of personality variables) and the Californian F scale to measure their levels of authoritarianism
• Participants were also asked a series of open-ended questions including ones:
  – About their relationship with their parents as a child
  – About their attitude to the “experimenter” and the “learner” from the original Milgram experiment

FINDINGS

• Little difference between obedient and defiant participants on the MMPI variables
• Higher levels of authoritarianism in the “obedient” participants than the “defiant” ones
• Significant differences between obedient and defiant participants that were consistent with the idea of the Authoritarian Personality
  – Obedient participants reported being less close to their fathers during childhood and were more likely to describe them in more negative terms
• Obedient participants found the authority figure (experimenter) from Milgram’s study as more admirable and the learner less so
  – This was not the case with defiant participants
• THESE FINDINGS SUGGEST THAT THE OBEDIENT GROUP WAS HIGHER ON THE TRAIT OF “AUTHORITARIANISM”
Some studies have reported more authoritarian participants are more obedient (in Milgram-type obedience situations)
- Elms and Milgram (1966) and Altemeeyer (1981)
- Although there was suspicion from participants whether the shocks were real or fake

Dambrun and Vatine (2010) overcame this issue by using an “immersive virtual environment”
- Participants were told it was a simulation and that shocks and victim’s reactions were not real, but simulated
- Participants still tended to respond as if the situation was real
- There was a significant correlation between participants’ RWA scores and the maximum voltage shock given to the victim

Therefore, participants who had higher RWA scores were the ones who obeyed the most
THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY - EVALUATION

EDUCATION MAY DETERMINE AUTHORITARIANISM AND OBEDIENCE

• Research (sucasa Middendorp and Meloen, 1990) has generally found that less-educated people are consistently more authoritarian than the well educated

• Milgram found the same with obedience (less-educated were more obedient than well-educated)

• This suggests that instead of authoritarianism causing obedience, lack of education could be responsible for both

• Although, even after educational levels were statistically controlled for in the Elms and Milgram study, the more obedient participants were still more authoritarian on the F scale

LEFT-WING VIEWS ARE ASSOCIATED WITH LOWER LEVELS OF OBEDIENCE

• Altemeyer’s reformation of the Authoritarian Personality in terms of “RWA” suggests that people who define themselves as on the right of the political spectrum (conservative) would be more likely to obey authority
  – So people who define themselves as more “left-wing” would probably be have lower levels of obedience

• Begue et al (2014) supports this view
  – They carried out a replication of Milgram’s study (fake game show, where contestants had to deliver (fake) electric shocks to other contestants)
  – Subsequent interviews using the “World Value Survey Questionnaire” revealed that the more participants defined themselves as on the left-wing, the lower the intensity of shocks they agreed to give to the other contestants
  – THIS SUGGESTS THAT SITUATIONAL CONTEXT DOES NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES AS A DETERMINING INFLUENCE IN OBEDIENCE
THE AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY - EVALUATION

SOCIAL CONTEXT IS MORE IMPORTANT

• Milgram accepted that obedience and disobedience might be down to nature or personality, but he didn’t feel this was strong!

• Milgram showed that variations in the social context of the study were primary causes of differences in participants’ levels of obedience, not variations in personality
  — He believed that the specific social situation caused participants to obey or resist regardless of their personalities

• “Relying on an explanation of obedience based purely on authoritarianism lacks the flexibility to account for these variations” (Milgram, 1974)

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AUTHORITARIAN AND OBEDIENT PARTICIPANTS

• Elms and Milgram’s research presented differences in the characteristics of the Authoritarian Personality and the characteristics of obedient participants
  — E.g. when they asked participants about their upbringing, many of the fully obedient participants reported having a very good relationship with their parents, rather than having grown up in the overly strict family environment associated with the Authoritarian Personality
  — It also seems unlikely that from the large number of participants used who were fully obedient in Milgram’s study; that the vast majority would have grown up in such a harsh and disciplinary environment
3.1.1 Social influence Specification

- 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, location and uniform, as investigated by Milgram.
- 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.
RESISTANCE TO SOCIAL INFLUENCE

SOCIAL SUPPORT

• Asch (1956) found that when social support is present, it helps an individual to resist conformity pressure from the majority (this was shown by using an ally in his experiment)

• Social support breaks the unanimity of the majority (i.e. showing other ways of thinking or responding)
  – The ally allows an individual to feel more confident in giving an independent assessment

• It is difficult to take a stand against authority because of obedient behaviour of others

• People are more confident in resisting the temptation to obey if there is an ally who is willing to join them in opposing authority
  – So disobedient peers can act as role models

• Individuals are able to use the defiance of peers as an opportunity to eradicate themselves from having to cause any further harm to a victim due to their obedience
  – Milgram demonstrated this when the participant had two other “teachers” with them (confederates); when they refused to shock the learner, the participant withdrew
RESISTANCE TO SOCIAL INFLUENCE

LOCUS OF CONTROL

• This is a person’s perception of personal control over their own behaviour
  – **Internal Locus of Control** = the belief that what happens to them is largely a consequence of their own ability and effort
    • They are more likely to demonstrate independence
    • People with high INTERNALITY rely less on the opinions of others (so **better able to resist social influence**)
      – They also seek information out for themselves and are achievement-oriented (so are less likely to conform/obey and more likely to be leaders)
  – **External Locus of Control** = the belief that what happens to them is determined by external factors (e.g. luck)
    • They have a sense that things “just happen to them” and are largely out of their controls
    • People with high EXTERNALITY approach events with passivity, they take less responsibility for their actions, less likely to be independent and more likely to accept the influence of others
RESISTANCE TO SOCIAL INFLUENCE - EVALUATION

SOCIAL SUPPORT

• Importance of response order
  – Allen and Levine (1969) showed that the participant resisted the majority when the confederate gave the correct response in position 1 than 4

• Support may not have to be valid to be effective
  – Allen and Levine (1971) showed that an ally is helpful in resisting conformity, but more so if they are perceived as offering valid social support
    • Invalid social support wore thick lens glasses and gave correct answer
    • Valid social support had normal vision (no glasses)

LOCUS OF CONTROL

• Locus of control is related to normative but not informational influence
  – Spector (1983) found a significant correlation between locus of control and susceptibility to normative social influence (externals more likely to conform to this than internals). No such relationship was found for susceptibility to informational social influence

• People are more external than they used to be
  – Meta-analysis by Twenge et al (2004) found that the locus of control of student and children samples (between 1960-2002) had become more external
RESISTANCE TO SOCIAL INFLUENCE - EVALUATION

SOCIAL SUPPORT IN THE REAL WORLD

• The Rosenstrasse Protest
  – In Rosenstrasse (Berlin) 2,000 Jewish men were being held by the Gestapo (Nazi secret police). Some married to non-Jewish women or were sons of these “mixed” marriages. Women protested gathered in protest and demanded the release of the men. The Gestapo threatened to open fire if they didn’t move. The women’s courage prevailed and they were set free.

• Research support for Locus of Control
  – Avtgis (1998) carried out a meta-analysis of studies of the relationship between locus of control and different forms of social influence.
  – The analysis showed that individuals who scored higher on external locus of control tended to be more easily persuaded, more easily influenced and more conforming than those who scored higher on internal locus of control.
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MINORITY INFLUENCE

• Minority influence creates a conversion process, where the consistent and committed approach makes people challenge the message itself (they want to understand why the minority hold their position)

• Conversion to the minority position, when it occurs, tends to be deeper and last longer

• To bring about this conversion process, the minorities must adopt a particular behavioural style (being consistent, committed and flexible in their arguments):

  – **CONSISTENT** – being consistent forces others to reassess the situation and consider why the minority are confident to maintain this over time. Minorities being especially consistent were more influential (Wood et al, 1994)

  – **COMMITMENT** – this suggests certainty, confidence and courage in the face of a hostile majority. There is more cost for an individual to join the minority than stay with the majority, so commitment is greater in the minority. Greater commitment may persuade people in the majority to take the minority seriously or even convert

  – **FLEXIBILITY** – neither a rigid minority approach (one that refuses to consider other opinions) or a minority that is too flexible (one that is too prepared to compromise) is effective at persuading a majority to shift to the minority position (Mugny, 1982). Although some flexibility is more effective than none at all
MINORITY INFLUENCE
MOSCOVICI ET AL (1969)

PROCEDURE
• Each group had 4 naïve participants and a minority of 2 confederates.
• They were shown a series of blue slides that varied (only in intensity) and were asked to judge the colour of each slide:
  – “Consistent” condition = confederates called all blue slides as green.
  – “Inconsistent” condition = confederates called slides “green” on two-thirds of the trials (blue on the other third).
  – Control condition = no confederates.

FINDINGS
• Control group = the 6 naïve participants called the slides “blue” throughout.
• Consistent minority influenced naïve participants to say “green” on over 8% of the trials.
• Inconsistent minority applied very little influence (did not differ significantly from the control group).

FOLLOW-UP STUDY
• “Consistent” condition judges more of the chips to be green than those in the “inconsistent” condition.
• This effect was even greater for those who hadn’t gone along with the minority during the main experiment (suggesting that the initial influence was more at a private than a public level).
MINORITY INFLUENCE - EVALUATION

RESEARCH SUPPORT FOR FLEXIBILITY

- Nemeth and Brilmayer (1987) – simulated jury (discussed the amount of compensation to be paid for someone in a ski-lift accident)
  - Confederate who put an alternative point of view across and refused to change, had no effect on other group members
  - Confederate who compromised towards the majority **did** have an influence on the rest of the group
  - **This was only evident in those who shifted late in negotiations (perceived as showing flexibility) rather than those who shifted earlier (perceived as caving in to the majority)**

THE REAL “VALUE” OF MINORITY INFLUENCE

- Nemeth (2010) suggests that disagreement (in the form of a minority opinion) “opens” the mind
  - This exposure to a minority opinion, people search for information and consider more options and make better decisions
  - Those with a minority opinion liberate people to say what they believe and they stimulate the conflicting and creative thought
  - **Van Dyne and Saavedra (1996) found that groups had improved decision quality when exposed to a minority perspective**
MINORITY INFLUENCE - EVALUATION

DO WE REALLY PROCESS THE MINORITY’S MESSAGE MORE?

• Mackie (1987) argues that the views of the minority do not necessarily lead to greater processing, but it is the **majority** who are more likely to create greater message processing
  – We tend to believe that the majority of group members share similar beliefs to ours

• If the majority’s views differ from our own, we must consider it carefully to understand why this is the case

• People tend not to waste time trying to process why a minority’s message is different, therefore, it tends to be less rather than more influential

A TIPPING POINT FOR COMMITMENT

• Xie et al (2011) suggested there is a “tipping point” where the number of people in a minority is sufficient to change the majority opinion
  – They developed computer models of social networks
  – Each individual held traditional views, but were open to other views
  – Committed individuals representing an alternative view were added and expressed their view consistently
  – If the listener held the same opinion as the speaker, it reinforced the listener’s belief
  – If the opinion was different, the listener considered it and moved onto talk to other individuals
  – If that individual also held the new belief, the listener adopted it
  – The percentage of committed opinion holders necessary to “tip” the majority into accepting the minority position was only 10%
MINORITY INFLUENCE IN NAME ONLY

• Nemeth (2010) claims it is still difficult to convince people of the values that differ from the norm
• People accept the principle on the surface to be seen as democratic and tolerant
• People get irritated quickly by alternative views that persist and they fear for the harmony within the group if they welcomed this view
  — Therefore, we tend to belittle the contrasting view or try to contain it
• People are encouraged to “fit in” and made to fear repercussions
• This means that the majority view persists and the opportunities for innovative thinking associated with minority influence are lost
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SOCIAL INFLUENCE PROCESSES IN SOCIAL CHANGE

SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH MINORITY INFLUENCE

• There have been 5 stages to this process:
  1. **Drawing attention to an issue**
  2. **Cognitive conflict**
      • Conflict caused between minority and majority views, but this makes the majority think more deeply about the issues
  3. **Consistency of position**
      • Minorities are more influential in bringing about social change when they express their views consistently, over time and with each other
  4. **The augmentation principle**
      • If a minority appears willing to suffer for their views, they are seen as more committed and so taken more seriously by others
  5. **The snowball effect**
      • Effect of minority influence is small to start with but then spreads more widely, until it reaches a “tipping point” which leads to wide-scale social change
SOCIAL INFLUENCE PROCESSES IN SOCIAL CHANGE

SOCIAL CHANGE THROUGH MAJORITY INFLUENCE (CONFORMITY)

• If people perceive something as the norm (i.e. based on what people think other believe and do), they tend to alter their behaviour to fit that norm.

• The gap between perceived norm and actual norm is called a “misperception” and correcting this is known as social norms interventions.

• These start by identifying a widespread misperception (e.g. young adults misperceive the amount of alcohol typically consumed by their peers).

• Perception correction strategies include media campaigns, promotional material, etc.

• The aim of these are to communicate the actual norm to the target population and lead to a change in behaviour.
SOCIAL INFLUENCE PROCESSES IN SOCIAL CHANGE - EVALUATION

- **Social change through minority influence may be very gradual**
  - Minority influence creates a potential for change rather than actual social change

- **Being perceived as “deviant” limits the influence of minorities**
  - Members of the majority avoid aligning themselves with the minority as they don’t want to be seen as deviant
  - So minorities face the challenge of avoiding being portrayed as deviant and making people embrace their position

- **Limitations of the social norms approach**
  - **Not all social norms interventions have led to social change** (DeJong et al, 2009. Alcohol use among students did not change, despite corrected misperceptions)

- **Social norms and the “boomerang effect”**
  - Schultz et al (2007) – social norms campaign was effective in getting heavy energy users to use less electricity, but it **also caused those who used less than the norm to increase their usage**

- **Overcoming the deviant minority problem: the Communist Manifesto** (Marx and Engels, 1848) – this lead to the birth of communism (socioeconomic order structured upon the common ownership of the means of production – facilities, machinery, tools, natural capital, etc)
  - The communist minority emphasised that they were part of the public (working class) and that the struggle was with the “owners of the means of production” i.e. the “bourgeoisie” (those that own the means of production i.e. the ruling class)