Unit 1
Social Influence

Types of Conformity:	Internalisation, identification and compliance
Explanations of Conformity:	Informational social influence and normative social influence
Variables Affecting Conformity:	Group size, unanimity, task difficulty. Asch's research
Conformity to Social Roles:	Zimbardo's research
Explanations for Obedience:	Agentic state, legitimacy of authority. Situational variables (proximity, location and uniform). Milgram's research.
Dispositional Explanations of Obedience:	The Authoritarian Personality
Explanations of Resistance to Social Influence:	The role of social support and locus of control
Minority Influence:	The role of consistency, commitment and flexibility
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Conformity

Conformity refers to how an individual or small group change their behaviour and/or attitudes as a result of the influence of a larger group, where there is no direct request for them to do so.

Explanations of why people conform:

Informational Social Influence – the desire to be right
Some people will change their thoughts and actions because they are uncertain what to think or do in any given situation, so shall look to the majority for information on what to do. This is known as Informational social influence. This is more likely to occur in **ambiguous** situations, in other words, when the correct way to behave is unclear. It is also more likely to result in **internalisation** – this means that the person who is conforming takes the values behind the behaviour as their own, and therefore it is likely to result in a permanent change in behaviour.

Normative Social Influence – the desire to be liked
Sometimes we change our behaviour because we want to be liked and accepted by those in the majority. This is known as normative social influence. It is most likely to result in **compliance** – this is where we change our public behaviour for the period of time we are with the group, but maintain our own private beliefs and are therefore likely to revert back to our former behaviour as soon as we leave the situation. Therefore, compliance usually results in a very short term change.

Evaluation of Explanations of conformity

Evaluation point 1
P Sherif's study using the autokinetic effect gives support for the existence of informational social influence.
E Sherif found that when participants were asked to judge how far a spot of light had moved in a dark room, when answering individually, estimates were relatively stable, but there was considerable variation between participants (between 2 and 12 inches – 5cm and 30 cm). However, when they were put into groups of three their judgements converged towards a group norm.
E Sherif suggests this is because the task is difficult and therefore the group members are more likely to look to others to guide them to the right answer
L therefore supporting the view that informational influence leads to conformity

Evaluation point 2
Asch's study gives support for the existence of normative social influence. He found that when participants were asked to give an answer to an easy task, (judging which out of three lines was the same as the sample line), but the confederates, who answered first, all gave the same wrong answer, there was a 32% general conformity rate across critical trials. As the task was easy, this suggests that participants conformed in order to fit in with the group. This is evidence to support normative social influence as an explanation for conformity

Evaluation point 3
The research in this area has useful applications. For example, members of a jury may feel pressured to conform through normative influence, which could lead to a miscarriage of justice if a minority feel pressured to agree with a majority verdict. This knowledge can be used by the courts to make jurors aware of the importance of being able to cast their vote privately, and not say it publicly, which should reduce the pressure each jury member feels to conform. This should result in a fairer verdict, one which truly reflects the opinions of the jury members, showing that psychological research can have real benefits in society.

Types of Conformity:

Kelman (1958) suggested three different types of conformity:

Compliance: This is the most superficial type of conformity. It occurs when an individual wants to achieve a favourable reaction from the other group members. A person will adopt this behaviour to gain specific rewards or avoid punishment and disapproval. With this type of conformity, it is likely that the person does not necessarily agree with the group, and will stop conforming when there are no group pressures to do so. Thus he or she conforms at a public level but not a private level. **This type of conformity usually results from normative social influence**

Identification: This is where the individual adapts their behaviour and or opinions because they value membership of a particular group. It is a deeper level of conformity than compliance, because the individual maintains the group behaviour/option, even when they are not with the group. However, it is still likely to lead to a temporary change as when the individual leaves the group they are likely to revert back to their old behaviour/attitudes. *Identification was demonstrated in Zimbardo's Stanford Prison experiment*

Internalisation: This is the deepest level of conformity and is sometimes referred to as 'true conformity'. It refers to when an individual accepts the influence of the group because the ideas and actions are rewarding and consistent with his or her own value system. A person will show conformity to a group because he or she genuinely agrees with their views (they have been 'internalised'). This means it leads to a change in behaviour/attitudes both in public and in private which is permanent. **This type of conformity usually results from informational social influence**

Evaluation of types of conformity research

Evaluation point 1
P Asch's study of conformity gives support for the existence of compliance.
E When Asch interviewed his participants post-procedure to try to determine why they had conformed to an obviously wrong answer, although a few reported that their judgement had been distorted by the majority, most said that they had conformed to avoid rejection and that they were aware that they were giving the wrong answer,
E supporting the view that they had changed their answer temporarily to avoid the disapproval of the group, rather than their behaviour being subject to a more permanent change.
L This supports the view that normative social influence tends to lead to compliance, a short-term change.

Evaluation point 2
Sherif's study of conformity, using the autokinetic effect, gives support for the existence of internalisation. This is because, when asked to judge how far a spot of light had moved in a dark room (a task that had no right answer), there were wide variations between participants' answers in the first individual condition. However, when they were put into groups of three, a group norm was established that was maintained in a further condition where they answered individually. This suggests that they were truly persuaded away from their original answers and had taken the group view as their own, thus demonstrating a fairly permanent change which is characteristic of internalisation

Evaluation point 3
The research into types of conformity has some practical applications. For example, it alerts us to the fact that if the majority are attempting to effect a permanent change in behaviour, it is important that they truly persuade the minority away from their existing view or behaviour. Failure to do so may result in little more than a superficial, temporary change in behaviour. For example, those attempting to change the behaviour of heavy drinkers or smokers, may achieve agreement in a group setting through compliance, but a permanent change in behaviour will only be achieved if the message is strong and persuasive enough to result in internalisation of the anti-drinking/smoking values.

Research Study 1: Sherif (1935) - A demonstration of Informational Social Influence and Internalisation

*This study can be used if a question asks you to outline and evaluate/discuss research **studies** into conformity, informational social influence or internalisation*

Procedure:
- **Sherif (1935)** carried out a laboratory experiment using a repeated measures design. He used the autokinetic effect to demonstrate conformity. The autokinetic effect is an optical illusion that is experienced when a person, placed in a completely dark room, perceives a stationary light to be moving.
- Participants were first asked to judge, individually, over several trials, how far the light appeared to move (condition 1). The participants were then put into groups of three, and asked to estimate again, announcing their estimates aloud (condition 2). They were then asked to go back to estimating individually (condition 3).
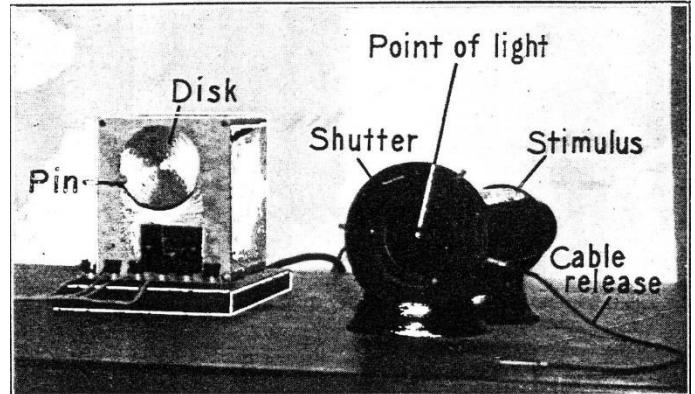
Findings:
- Sherif found that in condition 1, each individual's estimates were relatively stable, but there was considerable variation between participants (between 2 and 12 inches – 5cm and 30 cm).
- In condition 2, their judgements converged towards a group norm. In other words their group answer tended to be an average of the individual estimates.
- In condition 3, the individual participants tended to maintain the group norm

Conclusions:
- This study shows that when faced with an ambiguous situation (when the right answer is not clear), the participants looked to others for help and guidance. This can be explained by **informational social influence**, as the participants will changed their thoughts and actions because they were uncertain what estimate to give in this ambiguous situation. The finding that the individuals continued to use the group estimate when they were away from the group demonstrates that they had **internalised** the estimate of the distance.

Evaluation of Sherif's Research study

Evaluation point 1
The research is **high in internal validity** due to the highly controlled conditions of the experiment
This is because Sherif was able to isolate the variable of informational influence (working in a group of three) and measure its effect on the responses of the participants. He also found a way to demonstrate internalisation in a laboratory situation, which is a concept that does not lend itself well to experimental manipulation. This allows us to draw firm conclusions about the role of informational influence on a person's behaviour and/or attitudes and its potential to influence behaviour and attitudes in the long-term as well as the short term, which could be useful for those who might benefit from majority influence. For example, employers may find that working groups are more effective at solving problems, rather than relying on individual members of the workforce to generate solutions alone, which may not lead to a clear route forwards

Evaluation point 2
Other research has supported the view that conformity is likely to occur in an ambiguous situation.
In a similar procedure to Sherif, when Jenness asked participants to estimate the number of jellybeans in a jar, he found that in the group condition answered converged, much the same as in Sherif's study, and also that in a second private estimate, the individuals tended to move towards the group norm. The reliability of the research in this area adds weight to the conclusions made by Sherif, increasing the scientific validity of the research. However, we still have to bear in mind that these findings apply to laboratory studies, and therefore we may not see the same effect in a real-life situation.

Evaluation point 3
One of the reasons why the results may not generalise to a real-life situation is the **lack of mundane realism** in the task. Judging how far a spot of light moves in a dark room is unlikely to feel like an important task to the participant, so it is likely that they will care less about their answer than if they were asked to conform in a real-life situation, where coming up with the right answer may be much more important, for example, if someone was trying to solve a difficult maths problem, or come up with a solution to a work-based issue. This means that we may find that laboratory studies exaggerate the amount of conformity in the field, as they are only using trivial tasks, rather than issues that people care about, where they may be less prepared to change their view

Research Study 2: Asch (1951) – A Demonstration of Normative Social Influence and Compliance

*This study can be used if a question asks you to outline and evaluate/discuss research **studies** into conformity, normative social influence or compliance*

Aims:
- To see if participants would feel pressured into conforming to an obviously wrong answer

Procedure:
- Participants were asked to match one standard line with three possibilities

Standard line   1   2   3

- In a control study of 36 participants taking part in 20 trials each, only three mistakes were made over a total of 720 trials.
- Participants in the experimental condition (n=50, male college students) were tested in groups of 7, 8 or 9. All the other members of the group were confederates of the experimenter.
- The confederates were instructed beforehand to give the same wrong answers on certain critical trials.
- The naïve participant was always the last or second to last to answer.
- The confederates gave the same wrong answer on 12 of the 18 trials. These were referred to as 'critical trials'.

Findings:
- *26%* of participants did not conform on any critical trials.
- 5% of participants conformed on every critical trial
- *74% of participants* conformed at least once
- *32%* was the basic conformity rate (total number of trials)

After the experiment, the participants were asked why they had conformed:

Some wanted to please the experimenter, and they thought that conforming was what the experimenter wanted; a few genuinely doubted their own eyesight; others reported that they did not want to appear different or be made to look a fool.

Conclusions:

This research is a demonstration of **normative social influence.** The finding that many did not want to appear different means that they did not internalise the answer, and would have returned to their original belief, so this is an example of **compliance.**

Evaluation of Asch's study

Evaluation point 1

The research has **useful applications** which can potentially benefit society. For example, it alerts us to the fact that public voting may be affected by normative social influence, and therefore, organisations that require their members opinions, may be better off asking them to give their views privately. This has been taken on board by trade unions, who no longer ask for a show of hands when attempting to vote through, for example, strike action. Instead, private ballots are the norm, thus demonstrating how knowledge of normative social influence has improved the democratic process.

Evaluation point 2

There is evidence that suggests a **cultural bias** in Asch's research. For example, Smith & Bond (1996) analysed over 100 studies using an Asch type procedure and found that collectivist cultures conform more than individualist cultures. Asch's research was carried out in an individualist culture, so we would expect less conformity due to the value placed on independence and autonomy in such a culture. However, in a collectivist culture, we would expect more conformity due to the importance placed on inter-dependence and being part of a group. This means that Asch's results may not generalise to non-western cultures, or collectivist sub-cultures within western society.

Evaluation point 3

Asch's study **lacks mundane realism** due to the artificiality of the task and its trivial nature. It is unlikely that participants would have felt strongly about the task, because judging the length of a line is not an

emotive issue. However, in a real-life situation, conforming may involve compromise of the person's values, for example, being with a group of people who laugh at a racist joke. This may mean that someone is less likely to conform due to normative pressures in an everyday situation, and therefore, Asch may have over-estimated conformity as his results are not necessarily generalisable. In addition, the artificiality of the situation means that conformity is studied outside of its true social context, which makes conforming behaviour look odd or negative, when in fact, we might consider it to be essential for social cohesion

Variables that affect levels of conformity

Group Size
Asch manipulated the size of the majority to record the effect it had on the participant. Using his original procedure, he varied the number of confederates in the group. Participants were tested using either 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 10 or 15 confederates.

Findings
- Conformity was only 3% when there was one confederate
- Conformity was 13% when there were two confederates
- When there were three confederates, conformity increased to 33% and didn't increase much beyond this regardless of the number of confederates
- In some conditions, a larger group of 15 confederates led to slightly less conformity, maybe because the participant was more likely to become suspicious when there was such a large group

Unanimity
Asch wanted to see if one person dissenting from the majority would affect the likelihood of the participant conforming

Findings
- When the participant had one (confederate) ally who gave the right answer before the participant answered, conformity dropped to 5.5%
- Asch found that when the confederate dissenter gave a different answer from the majority, but that answer was still incorrect, this was equally effective in reducing conformity in the participant. Asch concluded from this that the important factor was that the participant had support for deviating from the group, not support for his answer

Difficulty of the Task
Conformity increases when the task becomes more difficult.
Findings
- Asch found that when he made the length of the lines more similar, conformity increased. This supports the view that conformity is more likely when the task is difficult

Evaluation of the research into factors that affect conformity

Evaluation point 1
The research into group size has **useful applications**. As Asch's original study is thought to support the existence of normative social influence, these variations are useful for understanding the optimum number needed in the majority to exert those pressures on the minority. This could be used in schools to make sure that children with problematic behaviour are grouped with three others whose behaviour is more desirable in the hope that the problem behaviour will be modified by the presence of the larger group. The observation that the larger group of 15 was less influential backs up the idea that large majorities are no more influential and possibly less influential than smaller ones. However, we have to be cautious about Asch's finding as it may have been caused by the real participant becoming suspicious that 'something was going on' when the majority is too large. This highlights one of the problems of using lab research to understand the influences behind real-life behaviour.

Evaluation point 2
The observation that majorities need to be unanimous to be influential has **implications** for those wishing to exert influence. For example, in a business setting, where a management committee may be attempting to influence a new member, they should be aware of the importance of maintaining the same public opinion, even if privately some members may disagree with the company line. It also alerts us to the increased pressure of those who are subjected to unanimous majorities, for example in a jury situation. It may be particularly difficult for one or two jurors to express their true opinion if faced with 10 or 11 people who are all in agreement. This also has useful applications as it shows the importance of allowing jurors write down whether or not they believe a suspect to by guilty, rather than declare it to the group.

Evaluation point 3
The observation that conformity increases when the task becomes more difficult **can be explained** through informational social influence. As the task becomes harder, there is a greater need to look to others for the right answer. Therefore, informational influence combines with normative influence to increase the conformity rate. This can be useful knowledge for those working in education, as it suggests that when students are working on a difficult assignment, they would benefit from being in a group, thus increasing their accuracy in the task.

Conformity to Social Roles: Zimbardo's Research
(An example of Identification)

Conformity to social roles refers to how an individual's behaviour changes according to the expectation of behaviour in that particular situation. For example, a person may behave very differently depending on whether they are performing a job, socialising with friends, or looking after their children.

Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Study

Aims:
- To test the dispositional versus the situational hypothesis. Are prison guards violent because they have violent personalities, or do their roles make them behave that way?
- To test the extent to which participants would adopt the role of prisoner or guard, even though the roles were determined randomly

Procedures:
- The study used a sample of 21 male student volunteers who were all rated as being psychologically stable
- Participants were randomly assigned to the role of either prisoner or guard. Zimbardo played the role of prison superintendent
- The study took place in the basement of Stanford University, which was converted into a mock prison. To add to the realism of the study, the prisoners were arrested at their homes by the local police, taken to the 'prison', stripped and deloused. They were dehumanised by wearing a loose fitting smock, a nylon stocking cap (to emulate a shaven head) and were referred to by number rather than name. Guards were deindividuated by wearing a uniform, reflective sunglasses and being referred to only as 'Mr. Correctional Officer'
- The guards were told to keep the prisoners in line, but other than that, no specific instructions were given about how each group should behave. No physical violence was allowed. The study was scheduled to last for two weeks

Findings:
- Within a day the prisoners had rebelled and ripped off their numbers. The guards responded by locking them in their cells and taking away their blankets

- As the study progressed, the guards became increasingly sadistic. Prisoners were humiliated, deprived of sleep, made to carry out demeaning tasks (such as cleaning the toilets with their bare hands).
- The prisoners became depressed and submissive. Some showed signs of serious stress. One prisoner was released after 36 hours due to fits of crying and rage. Three more were released with similar symptoms during the next few days.
- The study was called to a halt after six days due to the unforeseen effects on the prisoners

Conclusions:
- The study supports the situational hypothesis, rather than the dispositional hypothesis. This is because participants adopted the behaviour associated with the role they were assigned, even though those roles were randomly determined, and no psychological abnormality was found to be present in the participants before the study began
- Conforming to social roles leads people to behave differently to how they normally would

Evaluation of Zimbardo's research into conformity to social roles

Evaluation point 1
P: Zimbardo's research does not fully support the situational hypothesis
E: This is because it **fails to explain** why not all of the guards behaved equally aggressively towards the prisoners.
E: Some were reluctant to exercise their authority, whereas one guard in particular was seen as the ringleader. This suggests that individual differences play a part in the way someone responds to role expectations.
L: Therefore Zimbardo's assertion that situations cause people to behaviour in a particular way cannot be regarded as a stand-alone explanation without taking into account additional contributory factors such as biological predisposition to aggression or past experience, which combined with the situation may trigger the aggressive behaviour

Evaluation point 2
The research **lacks reliability** as others have failed to replicate Zimbardo's original findings. Reicher & Haslam replicated Zimbardo's study in 2002, and this replication was broadcast by the BBC. The findings were very different to Zimbardo's. The guards were unwilling to impose authority over the prisoners, who rapidly took charge of the prison. Following the breakdown of authority in the prison, both groups attempted to establish a fair and equal social system. When this failed, a small group of prisoners took control and the study was called off. This could suggest that Zimbardo's findings may have been a 'one off', and caused by flaws in the methodology of the original study. It could also suggest that Zimbardo's study lacks temporal validity and that people are now less likely to conform to the demands of a role if it leads to a negative outcome for others. It may also be that social roles are less rigidly defined now than they were in the past.

Evaluation point 3
There are many **ethical issues** with the way Zimbardo carried out his research. He has been criticised for not accurately assessing the potential impact on his participants, and failing to call a halt to the procedure soon enough when it became clear that some of those taking part were experiencing psychological harm.
Partly this was due to Zimbardo taking on the role of prison superintendent, and therefore not creating enough distance from the procedure to be able to maintain professionalism in his role as psychologist. This means that Zimbardo failed in his duty to protect the welfare of his participants. Furthermore, Zimbardo's involvement in the study could have had an influence on the behaviour of the participants. He could have unknowingly cued them to behave in a particular way (investigator effects). The artificiality of the situation could have led to a change in behaviour due to demand characteristics, making the results of the study invalid.

Obedience

Milgram's original 1963 study into obedience (background information)

Aims:
- Milgram (1963) was interested in researching how far people would go in obeying an instruction if it involved harming another person.
- His research aimed to test the belief, following the Nazi atrocities, that 'German's are different'. He believed that in the right circumstances anyone is capable of performing an evil act

Procedure:
- Volunteers were recruited for a study investigating the effects of punishment on learning. Participants were 40 males, aged between 20 and 50, from a range of occupations.
- At the beginning of the experiment they were introduced to another participant, who was actually a confederate of the experimenter. They drew straws to determine their roles – learner or teacher – although this was fixed so that the confederate was always the learner.
- The "learner" (Mr. Wallace) is then taken to an adjoining room and strapped to a chair and attached to electrodes so that he could receive shock from an electricity generator. After he has been read a list of word pairs, the "teacher" tests him by naming a word and asking the learner to recall its partner/pair from a list of four possible choices.
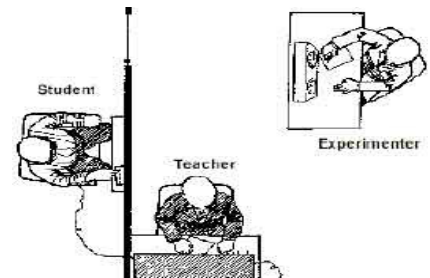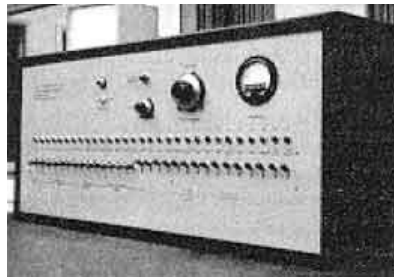
- The teacher is told to administer an electric shock every time the learner makes a mistake, increasing the level of shock each time. There were 30 switches on the shock generator marked from 15 volts (slight shock) to 450 (danger – severe shock). Unbeknown to the participant, no actual shocks are received by the confederate and his protests are from a taped pre-recording.
- The learner gave mainly wrong answers (on purpose) and for each of these the teacher gave him an electric shock. When the teacher refused to administer a shock the experimenter was to give a series of orders / prods to ensure they continued.

Results
- All 40 of the participants in the original study obeyed up to 300 volts
- Overall, 65% of the participants gave shocks up to 450 volts (obeyed) and 35% stopped sometime before 450 volts.
- During the study many participants showed signs of nervousness and tension including trembling, stuttering, digging fingernails into their flesh, indicating that although they were obeying, they were not enjoying what they were doing. Three of the participants experienced seizures.

Conclusion
- Ordinary people are likely to follow orders given by an authority figure, even to the extent of killing an innocent human being. Obedience to authority is ingrained in us all from the way we are brought up.

Explanations of Obedience: Psychological

Agentic State
Milgram suggested that people operate on one of two levels. Most of the time we operate in **autonomous mode**. This means that we feel responsible for our own behaviour and therefore we are likely to act according to law and conscience, as we know we are accountable for our actions. However, in certain situations, an individual may slip into **agentic state**. This occurs when the individual feels able to pass responsibility for their actions onto an authority figure. It is so called because the individual in this state regards themselves as an 'agent' of the authority figure and no longer feels responsible or accountable for their actions. This allows them to act in ways that would not be possible if they were in autonomous mode.

Legitimate Authority
People are socialised into acting on the requests of a legitimate authority. We tend to obey those with authority because we assume they know what they are doing. If someone has legitimate authority they have a role that is defined by society that gives them a right to exert their control over others. We may obey these people because we trust them, or because we believe that they have the power to punish us. Legitimate authority may come from a person's status in society, which may be conveyed by a uniform, or their position in the family structure.

Evaluation of explanations of obedience

Evaluation point 1
There is **research evidence to support** the role of agentic state in obedience to authority. Film evidence and transcripts from Milgram's study show that many of the participants were reluctant to go on with the procedure, but were more willing to do so when they were assured by the experimenter that they were not responsible for the outcomes and that the experimenter would take full responsibility if anything happened to 'Mr. Wallace', suggesting that they were operating in agentic mode and that this enabled them to continue with the procedure. Furthermore, there have been many examples in history where individuals who have committed atrocities have attempted to blame their actions on the authority figure by saying 'I was just following orders'. Notable examples include Adolph Eichmann, who orchestrated the 'final solution' (the Nazi plan of mass extermination of European Jews) and William Calley, who sent his troops into My Lai during the Vietnam war to massacre the inhabitants of the village, showing that the theory can help to explain real-world obedience behaviour.

Evaluation point 2
The research in this area has **useful applications**. Both Eichmann and Calley were convicted of their crimes. Their defence of 'only following orders' was not accepted. Therefore, if we can educate people to recognise the dangers of blind obedience to malevolent authority, and make sure people understand that they will be accountable for their actions, then we may reduce the amount of destructive obedience in society. Therefore some criticisms of Milgram's research may be unfounded, for example the suggestion that the research can enable people to get away with their behaviour by blaming an authority figure. Milgram is not suggesting this, rather that we all need to be aware that only we are responsible for our behaviour. This should reduce blind obedience to authority rather than increase it.

Evaluation point 3
There is evidence from variations of Milgram's procedure and from other **research to support** the view that perceptions of legitimacy of the authority figure has an impact on obedience behaviour. For example, when Milgram moved the study to a run-down office, and the experimenter was apparently just a member of the public, obedience dropped to 47.5%, from the 65% found in the original study when the experimenter was working in the prestigious Yale university. Additionally, Bickman (1974) found that 92% of pedestrians obeyed an order to give a stranger money for a parking meter when the person giving the order was dressed as a security guard, compared to only 49% when he was dressed in ordinary clothing. Showing that when the authority figure has greater status, and therefore more legitimate authority, they are more likely to be obeyed.

Explanation of Obedience: The Role of Situational Factors

Proximity
This can refer to how close the person is to the consequences of their actions when obeying an authority figure. Milgram found that the distance between 'Mr Wallace' and the participant influenced the obedience rate. The further away the participant is from 'Mr. Wallace', the more able they are to avoid witnessing the consequences of their obedient behaviour, and therefore the more likely they are to obey.
The proximity of the participant to the experimenter also has a bearing on the obedience level. This is probably because the pressure the participant feels to obey the experimenter is lessened if he is not in the same room

Location
Location can have an effect on obedience rates because some locations increase the perceived legitimacy of the authority figure. For example, the experimenter in Milgram's study had a high amount of perceived authority because he was attached to a very prestigious institution (Yale University). Therefore, we would expect obedience to that authority figure to be higher than if the study had have been carried out in a less prestigious institution.

Uniform
A uniform can give the perception of greater authority, and therefore we would expect that obedience rates would be higher if the person giving the order is wearing a uniform

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Evaluation of research into the role of situational factors in obedience

Evaluation point 1
There is **research evidence to support** the role of proximity in obedience. Milgram found that
when the teacher and learner were brought into the same room, obedience dropped to 40%. Furthermore, when the experimenter left the room and gave orders by telephone, obedience dropped to 20.5%, much reduced from the original 65% obedience rate. This shows that having to directly face the consequences of your actions (proximity to the learner), or not being directly faced with the authority figure (less proximity to the experimenter), has an effect on reducing obedience.

Evaluation point 2
There is also **research evidence to support** the roles of both location and uniform in obedience. Bickman (1974) found that 92% of pedestrians obeyed an order to give a stranger money for a parking meter when the person giving the order was dressed as a security guard, compared to only 49% when he as dressed in ordinary clothes, supporting the view that wearing a uniform leads to increased obedience. Milgram found that when he moved his procedure away from the prestigious Yale University, to a seedy downtown office, and the experimenter was apparently just a member of the public, the obedience rate dropped from 65% to 48%, supporting the view that location plays a part in obedience. Both of these factors can be linked to the concept of legitimate authority. A uniform, or a prestigious location and the status associated with it, both increase the impression of legitimacy of the authority figure and, in turn, increase obedience.

Evaluation point 3
The research **fails to consider** other factors that may be important in understanding obedience. Kilman and Mann (1974) replicated Milgram's original study procedures in Australia but found that only 16% of the participants shocked the learner at the maximum voltage level of 450V whereas Mantell (1971), on the other hand, showed that it was 85% when conducted in Germany. This cross-cultural comparison shows that in different societies, children may be socialised differently from a young age to be more, or less, obedient. This suggests that while situational factors like uniform and proximity are important, other factors may play a more significant role in obedient behaviour

Explanations of Obedience: Dispositional Factors

The Authoritarian Personality

The authoritarian personality was first identified by Adorno et al (1950). Milgram suggested that someone with an authoritarian personality is more likely to be obedient. It results from an upbringing with strict, dogmatic parents who are emotionally distant. These parents tend to use harsh physical punishments for disobedience, thus instilling in the child the need to obey those in authority. This upbringing leads to a high respect for authority which continues into adulthood and becomes part of the personality. This means that that they place high importance in obedience to authority, and believe that those in a position of power have to be obeyed. So while they attempt to control and dominate those that they consider to be beneath them in the hierarchy, they are very obedient to those they consider to be above them in the hierarchy, which would explain why those individuals are more likely to obey in the Milgram procedure.

Evaluation of the Authoritarian Personality as an explanation of obedience

Evaluation point 1
There is **research evidence to support** the view that the authoritarian personality is linked to higher rates of obedience. Zillmer et al (1995) reported that 16 Nazi war criminals scored highly on three of the F Scale dimensions. Elms & Milgram (1966) found that the highly obedient participants in Milgram's study scored significantly higher on the F scale than the less obedient participants. Both of these studies offer some support for the view that authoritarianism may lead to higher levels of obedience. However, as Zillmer found that only three of the dimensions on the F-scale were relevant, we may question whether it is the authoritarian personality as a whole that is linked to obedience, or whether it is a few specific traits that happen to be part of that personality type.

Evaluation point 2
There is a difficulty establishing a cause and effect link between the authoritarian personality and obedience. This is because the supporting **research is correlational and therefore lacks internal validity**. For example, in Elms and Milgram's study, we cannot say that having an authoritarian personality caused higher obedience because there may have been another unaccounted for variable, or variables, that were responsible for both personality and obedience behaviour. In addition, it is not possible in any retrospective study, where we are trying to explain a behaviour through something that has happened in the past, to establish the direction of the effect. It could be that the authoritarian views of the participants resulted from their experience of being part of the Nazi regime, rather than the other way round. These problems highlight the difficulty of establishing a dispositional basis of any behaviour such as obedience.

Evaluation point 3
It is thought that the theory itself may be subject to **research bias**. This is because it presumes that the authoritarian personality is exclusively limited to right wing individuals. However, in a preliminary study, Conway devised a scale to measure dogmatic and authoritarian views in left wing individuals and found a parallel with Adorno's results indicating that left-wing individuals are just as likely to display authoritarian traits as right wing individuals, and therefore may be just as susceptible to obeying authority as right-wing individuals. This shows how the expectations of the researcher may skew our view of personality types that are likely to be associated with increased obedience, therefore giving us a limited understanding.

# Explanations of Resistance to Social Influence

Social Support

One reason that people can resist the pressure to conform or obey is if they have an ally, someone supporting their point of view, or at least, in the case of conformity, a dissenter – someone who deviates from the majority, although they may not share the same view or behaviour. This gives the individual social support for non-conformity or non-obedience. In relation to conformity, this can be because they no longer fear being ridiculed, allowing them to avoid normative social influence to conform. It also helps them to resist pressure to obey because it is easier to stand up to an authority figure if there is someone else to share the consequences of doing so. Therefore, dissenters make disobedience and non-conformity an option that the individual may not have considered without them.

Locus of Control

This refers to the extent to which individuals believe that they can control the events in their lives.
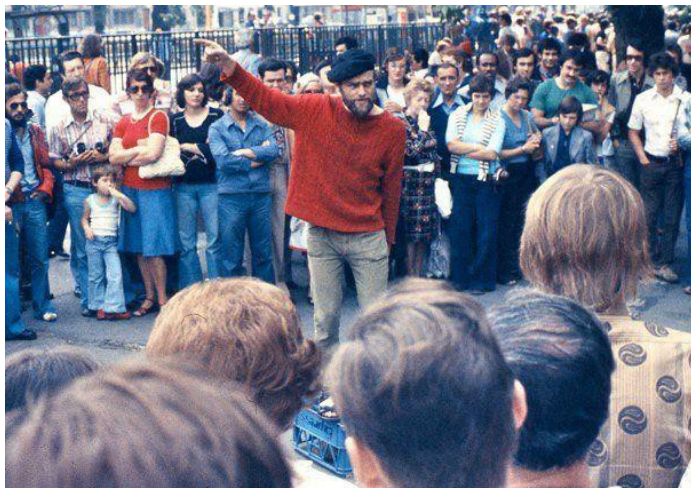
Individuals with a high internal locus of control believe that events result primarily from their own behaviour and actions. Those with a high external locus of control believe that powerful others, fate, or chance primarily determine events. This means that those with a high internal locus of control have better control of their behaviour and are more likely to attempt to influence other people because they are more likely to assume that their efforts will be successful. They tend to be more likely to be confident and therefore less likely to need approval from others, so that means they are less likely to change their behaviour to fit in with the group. This means that we would expect those with a high internal locus of control to be more resistant to the pressures of social influence. For example, they are more likely to believe that events happen as a result of their own choices and decisions so will not obey if they feel uncomfortable with their behaviour as they will automatically feel responsibility for that behaviour, unlike those with an external locus of control, who are more likely to be able to pass responsibility for something that they feel uncomfortable with, onto someone else (agentic state).

Evaluation of explanations of resistance to social influence

Evaluation point 1

Research findings from studies of conformity and obedience support the view that social support increases the likelihood that a person will resist social influence. Milgram found that when there were two disobedient confederates present in the procedure, obedience in the real parti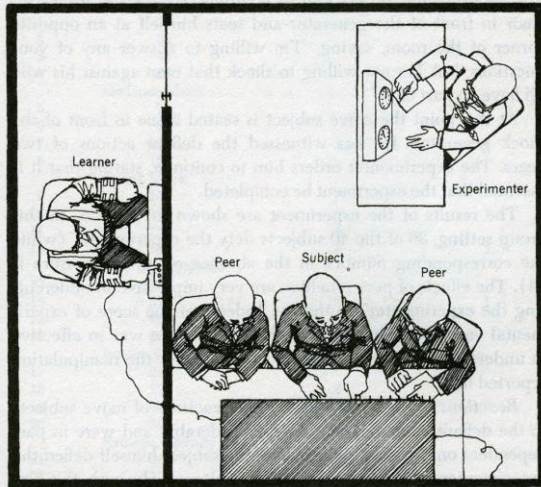cipant dropped dramatically to 10%. Conversely, when there were two *obedient* confederates, obedience rose to 92.5%. This demonstrates the power of social support (or lack of it) in obedient behaviour. Asch found that in his conformity procedure, when one of the confederates dissented from the majority and gave the right answer, conformity dropped to 5.5%. Interestingly, this percentage remained the same even when the confederate dissenter gave a different answer from the majority, but that answer was still incorrect. Asch concluded from this that the important factor was that the participant had support for deviating from the group, not support for his answer, thus supporting the view that any deviation from the majority will act as social support for non-conformity.

Fig. 18. Two peers rebel.

Evaluation point 2

There is also research to support the role of internal locus of control in resistance to social influence. Elms and Milgram (1974) investigated the background of some of the disobedient participants from Milgram's first four obedience experiments. They found that disobedient participants had a high internal locus of control and scored higher on a scale that measured their sense of social responsibility. Furthermore, Oliner & Oliner (1988) interviewed two groups of non-Jewish people who had lived through the Holocaust in Nazi Germany. They compared 406 people who had rescued Jews with 126 who had not done so. Oliner & Oliner found that the 'rescuers' were more likely to have scores demonstrating a high internal locus of control than the non-rescuers, and also scored more highly on measures of social responsibility. Suggesting that having an internal locus of control is likely to lead to independent behaviour.

Evaluation point 3
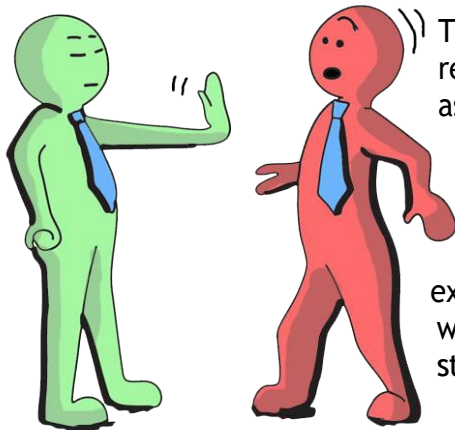
The supporting **research lacks internal validity** as it is correlational. Therefore it is not possible to say internal locus of control causes resistance to social influence. There may be another factor that is associated with locus of control that causes independence. For example, it may be that certain parental styles lead to high internal locus of control *and* high levels of independent behaviour. Furthermore, the research **lacks reliability** as not all studies support the view that locus of control is associated with resistance to social influence. For example, Williams and Warchal (1981) studied 30 university students who were given a range of conformity tasks based on Asch's procedure. Each student was also assessed using Rotter's locus of control scale. They found that those who conformed did not score differently on the locus of control scale but they were less assertive, so assertiveness may have more to do with conformity than locus of control, showing that the explanation is limited.

Minority Influence

This refers to when an individual, or a small group change the behaviour and/or attitudes of a larger group. It is the opposite of conformity. Minority influence usually results in internalisation (a permanent change) because it is likely to result from informational social influence, and therefore represents a true conversion. In order to be successful, a minority needs to have certain qualities, including:

- **Consistency** – the minority will only be influential if they stick to their view over a period of time.

- **Flexibility** – There has to be a degree of flexibility, in other words, being able to adapt and not rigidly stick to an attitude or behaviour in light of contradictory information

- **Commitment (the augmentation principle)** This means that if the supporters of the belief are willing to suffer for their views then they are taken more seriously by the majority; the impact of their position on the majority is increased or **'augmented'**. As a result they are more likely to be influential.

Minority Influence – key research Moscovici et al (1969) Blue-Green Study

Aim : To investigate the effects of a **consistent** minority on a majority. **Moscovici (1969)** conducted a re-run of Asch's experiment, but in reverse. Instead of one subject amongst a majority of confederates, he placed two confederates together with four genuine participants. The participants were first given eye tests to ensure they were not colour-blind.

Procedure : His sample consisted of 172 female participants who were told that they were taking part in a colour perception task. Each participant was placed in a group consisting of four participants and two confederates. They were shown 36 slides which were clearly different shades of blue and asked to state the colour of each slide out loud.

In the **consistent** condition the two confederates answered green for each of the 36 slides. They were totally consistent in their responses.

In the **inconsistent** condition they answered green 24 times and blue 12 times. In this case they were inconsistent in their answers. Would the responses of the two confederates influence those of the four participants? In other words, would there be minority influence?

Results :

The findings showed that the consistent minority influenced the naïve participants to say 'green' on over 8% of the trials. The inconsistent minority exerted very little influence (only 1.25% of the trials) and did not differ significantly from the control group.

Conclusion : Minorities can influence a majority, but not all the time and only when they behave in certain ways (e.g. consistent behaviour style).
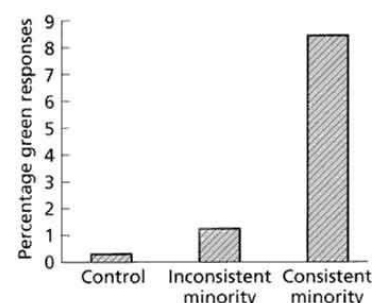
Evaluation of research into minority influence
Evaluation point 1
Nemeth and Brilmayer (1987) studied the role of flexibility in a simulated jury situation where group members discussed the amount of compensation to be paid to someone involved in a ski-lift accident. When a confederate put forward an alternative point of view and refused to change his position, this had no effect on the other group members. A confederate who compromised, and therefore showed some degree of shift towards the majority, did exert influence over the rest of the group. However this was only evident in those who shifted late in negotiations (perceived as showing flexibility) rather than those who shifted earlier (perceived as having 'caved in' to the majority). This supports that view genuine flexibility is an important factor in influencing majorities.

Evaluation point 2
Whilst there is research that supports the factors affecting minority influence, there are a number of issues with the research. Firstly the artificiality of the tasks such as the green-blue slide study versus the real issues minorities are campaigning for make it questionable about the extent to which conclusions can be drawn. Shifting an opinion on the colour of a slide does not equate to much more complex issues of equality, or animal rights or climate change to name just a few. Secondly research does not take into account the struggles of real minorities against majorities in the wider world. Majorities in real-life have power and status, not just numbers. For these reasons the usefulness of research into minority influence such as Moscovici's or Nemeth's may be limited as it they may in fact overestimate the power that minorities have in the real world.

Evaluation point 3
Perhaps more useful than artificially designed tasks is to consider minority groups that have been successful to illustrate the processes involved in exerting influence. For example if we take the women rights movement you can see the importance of the factors of consistency, commitment and flexibility in shifting the majority that eventually led to the same voting rights as men in 1928. For example the commitment to their message shown by sacrificing their freedom when arrested and imprisoned or sacrificing their health and wellbeing (during hunger strikes while imprisoned). Remaining Consistent to their message over time despite the repercussions to themselves. They also showed an degree of flexibility, the right to vote for women was only for women over the age of 30 in 1918, it was not until 10 years later that women had equal rights. This is just one example of a real -life example of a minority that has successfully caused change in society suggesting minorities do hold power however it is not likely to easy or rapid and perhaps suggests only with the right strategies over a prolonged period that they can be effective.

Social influence Processes in social change

Key terms

- Cognitive conflict (cognitive dissonance) refers to the mental conflict that occurs when a person's behaviors and beliefs do not align.
- Social cryptomamensia- which describes our failure to give credit to minorities for their role in provoking social change.
- The snowball effect - The snowball effect describes when somethings grows in significance or size in an increasingly faster rate. The name comes from imagining a snowball rolling down a hill - it gets larger and larger with more snow and becomes faster and more powerful as it moves onward.

The best way of thinking about how social change occurs is to understand it as a series of each stage with an example is useful to.

Stage I-Drawing attention to an issue
Minorities can bring about social change by drawing the majority's attention to an issue. If their views are different to those held by the majority, this creates conflict that they are motivated to reduce. Eg. The suffragettes used educational and political and militant tactics to draw attention to the fact that women were denied the same voting rights as men.

Stage 2 - Cognitive conflict
If the minority view, or information they hold, leads to a conflict with the existing values of the majority, this may cause a shift towards the minority viewpoint to reduce the cognitive conflict or 'dissonance' that will be experienced as a result of the message. While the conflict doesn't always result in a move to the minority position it does mean that the majority think more deeply about the issues being challenged. The suffragettes created conflict for majority group members between the existing status quo (only men allowed to vote) and the position advocated by the suffragettes (votes for women). Some people dealt with this conflict by moving towards the position held by the suffragettes, others simply dismissed it.
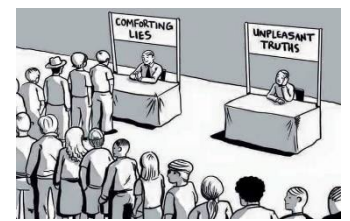
Stage 3- Consistency of position
Research on minority influence (Moscovici) has stabled that minorities tend to be more influential in bringing about social change when they express their arguments consistently (over time). The suffragettes were consistent in their views, regardless of the attitudes of those around them. Protests and lobbying continued for years before women were deemed ready to be able to vote.

Stage 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 than others. Because the suffragettes were willing to risk imprisonment or even death from hunger strike their influence become more powerful (i.e. it was augmented).

Stage 5 - the snowball effect
Minority influence initially has a relatively small effect but this then spreads more widely as more and more people consider the issues being promoted until it reaches a 'tipping point, at which point it leads to wide-scale change. Initially winning over some members of the majority is due individuals resolving their cognitive conflict and thus internalising the minority message. The later, wider shift The is more associated with normative social influence and compliance, in other words, changing your behaviour and attitudes to fit in. The minority has now gained so much momentum and size the remaining people conform to avoid social disapproval.
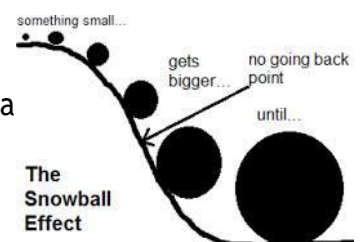
Stage 6 - Social cryptoamnesia

(or the dissociation model) This is where the majority group take on board the views and ideas of the minority but either forget where they came from or deliberately disassociate themselves. This is because minorities tend to have a negative image that members of the majority do not want to be associated with, so while they become persuaded by the arguments of the negative minority, they seek to distance themselves from the source of the information. Overwhelming people in society agree in the voting rights of women, however many people fail to recognise the struggle to get there and wouldn't align themselves with feminist groups.

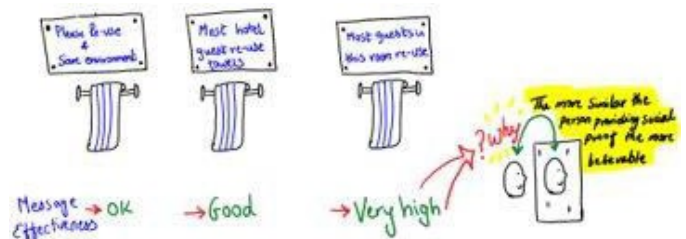## Evaluation of research into social change

Evaluation point 1

There is research to support the phenomena of social cryptoamnesia in the process of social change. Bashir et al (2013) found that participants were less likely to behave in environmentally friendly ways because they did not want to be associated with stereotypical and minority environmentalists. They rated environmental activists and feminists in negative ways, describing them as "militant', 'tree huggers' and 'man haters', as a result this reduced people's willingness to adopt social change behaviours that were advocated by activists. Therefore to explain the recent shift to environmentally friendly behaviours becoming the norm, social cryptoamnesia must have occurred. Society must have forgotten the source of where the message came from in order for social change to happen.

Evaluation point 2

Although social change is often initiated by minority groups there is evidence for the role of majority influence in social change. Nolan et al (2008) hung messages on the front doors of houses in San Diego, California that either told them that most residents were trying to reduce their energy usage, or asked them to reduce their energy usage, but made no reference to other residents. Nolan found significant decreases in energy usage in the first group only. Similarly Shultz (2007) found 75% guests re-used their towels each day (rather than requiring a fresh one) when seeing the message 'most guests in this room re use. This implies that people are more willing to change their habits if they believed a majority of others had done so too, and thus demonstrated how majority influence can play a part in bringing about social change.

Evaluation point 3

As a result of research future minority groups can apply the processes to bring about further social change. Bashir's advice to minorities hoping to create social change is to avoid behaving in ways that reinforce the stereotypes as this will always be off-putting to the majority they want to influence. One of the most significant examples of social change faced just this problem. The birth of communism owes much to the careful way in which an influential minority overcame a 'deviant: problem. To avoid being portrayed as deviants, communists made it clear in their communist manifesto that they had no interests separate from those of the majority (the proletariat or working class). In fact, the communist minority emphasised the fact they were part of the proletariat, and that the struggle was actually with the 'Owners of the means of productions (the bourgeoisie). In simple terms, they were saying 'we aren't the deviants we are just like you -- it's the bourgeoise who are against us all.