## Social Influence

Conformity differs from obedience in that conformity involves adjusting one's behaviour or beliefs to align with the norms of a group, while obedience involves following the orders or commands of an authority figure.

## Types of Conformity

Compliance - When a person changes their public behaviour, but not their private beliefs. This is usually a short-term change and is often the result of normative social influence.

Identification - When a person changes their public behaviour and their private beliefs, but only while they are in the presence of the group. This is a usually a short-term change and normally the result of normative social influence (NSI).

Internalisation - When a person changes their public behaviour and their private beliefs. This is usually a long-term change and often the result of informational social influence (ISI).

## Explanations of Conformity

### ISI

An example of ISI is when someone conforms when they are unsure of the correct answer; a student may copy their peer if they do not know the answer to a maths question.

ISI is shown in the variations by Asch for task difficulty.

ISI is where a person conforms to gain knowledge, or because they believe that someone else is 'right'.

ISI happens when people are uncertain of how to behave so look to others and conform.

Jenness (1932) demonstrated the power of conformity in an ambiguous situation which supports ISI.

Schultz et al (2008) found they could change the behaviour of hotel guests by providing printed messages on how to save energy. This supports ISI.

In Asch's variation on task difficulty, conformity levels increased as people looked to others. This supports ISI.

Lucas et al (2006) found that participants given easy and hard maths questions are likely to conform to others when the problems are harder. This supports ISI.

Asch (1955) suggested that the power of ISI may be reduced when a dissenting confederate is involved. This can lower conformity levels.

Perrin and Spencer (1980) found less conformity with engineering students as they were used to being precise/ confident when solving problems.

**NSI**

An example of NSI is when someone conforms to fit in with a group; a student may copy their peers' style of dress/ appearance to gain social acceptance and limit any ridicule.

NSI is shown in the variations by Asch on group size.

NSI is where a person conforms in order to be accepted and fit in with a group. They do this because it is socially rewarding, and they want to avoid social rejection.

Sherif (1935) asked participants to estimate how far a point of light had moved. When in groups, participants changed their personal view to that of the group. This supports NSI.

Asch (1956) asked participants why they conformed and most said they did not want to look different, so went along with the group. This supports NSI.

Asch (1951) showed that people will conform to a majority view. This supports NSI.

Asch (1951) demonstrated in his baseline study evidence to support NSI. In the results 74% of all participants conformed at least once.

McGhee & Teevan (1967) found that students who were nAffiliators were more likely to conform to the group. This supports NSI.

**Asch's Baseline Study**

Aim: To examine the extent to which social pressure from a majority could affect a person's likelihood to conform.

Method: Procedure used a line judgement task with 50 male students from Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania. Participants were deceived into believing confederates were real participants. Each person had to say out loud which line was most like the target line. Confederates gave the same incorrect answer on 12 critical trials.

Results: Participants conformed to the incorrect answers on 32% of the critical trials. 74% of participants conformed on at least one critical trial.

Conclusion: Participants conformed due to normative social influence and the desire to fit in.

**Review**

Solomon Asch (1951) investigated the extent to which social pressure from a majority group could affect a person's likeliness to conform.

Asch conducted a classic experiment in Social Psychology where participants were asked to match the length of lines on cards. The experiment involved confederates giving the incorrect answer to see if the real participant would conform to the majority view. On average, about one third of participants (32%) conformed to the majority view, with about 74% conforming at least once. Participants conformed due to NSI (wanting to fit in with the group) and ISI (believing the group is better informed).

The presence of an ally who goes against the majority choice can greatly reduce conformity.

The difficulty of the task increases conformity, as people are more likely to look to others for confirmation when they are uncertain.

Conformity decreases when participants are allowed to answer in private, as there are fewer group pressures and normative influence.

**Evaluation**

Temporal Validity: If the findings of the research would apply today. Asch's baseline study was conducted in 1951, so may not be applicable today. Population Validity: The sample in Asch's study lacks this type of validity. It is not representative of the wider population. Ecological Validity: In lab experiments like Asch this type of validity is low, as the artificial setting does not represent real life. Also the tasks may lack mundane realism.

Demand characteristics: As participants were invited into a lab setting, they may have changed their behaviour to please the researchers. This decreases the validity of the findings.

Generalisation: The sample is not representative as it only used 50 male students from the USA. The sample is culturally biased as it only used students from the USA (ethnocentric). The sample gender biased as it only used male participants (androcentric).

Reliability is high when there are strict controls over the situational variables and there are standardised procedures for all the participants. Asch's line test study was reliable as it was conducted in a lab with high controls and standardised procedures for all participants.

Asch's study has many applications to real life as it helps our understanding of ISI and NSI.

Ethical Guidelines apply to all psychological studies and follow the code of conduct. Deception was broken in Asch's study as participants were led to believe the confederates were real participants.

Supporting evidence from;

Jenness (1932) conducted an experiment on conformity using a glass bottle filled with 811 white beans. The sample consisted of 101 psychology students who individually estimated the number of beans in the bottle. Participants were then divided into groups of three and asked to provide a group estimate through discussion. After the discussion, participants were given another opportunity to individually estimate the number of beans. Jenness found that nearly all participants changed their original answer after the group discussion. On average, male participants changed their answer by 256 beans and female participants changed their answers by 382 beans. These results demonstrate the power of conformity in an ambiguous situation and are likely to be the result of informational social influence (ISI).

Conflicting evidence from;

Perrin and Spencer (1980) suggest the findings may lack temporal validity. They found just one conforming response in 396 trials with engineering students.

## Asch's Variations

In one variation the task was made more difficult, by making the difference between the line lengths significantly smaller. The rate of conformity subsequently increased. When the task increases in difficulty, conformity increases, possibly due to informational social influence (ISI).

In the variation on unanimity, conformity decreased when there was support for the participant's belief or when the group's unanimous position was broken. If one of the confederates gave a different incorrect answer to the majority, conformity dropped to 9%. If one of the confederates was instructed to give the correct answer throughout, the rate of conformity only dropped to 5%.

In the group size variation, conformity increased with the size of the majority, reaching its highest level with three confederates. When there was one confederate, the real participants conformed on just 3% of the critical trials and when the group size increased to two confederates, the real participants conformed on 12.8% of the critical trials. However, when there were three confederates, the real participants conformed on 32% of the critical trials, the same as in Asch's baseline experiment.

### Group Size

Aim: To see how group size, affects the rate of conformity.

Method: This variation ranged from using 1 confederate to up to 15 confederates. The procedure was the same as in Asch's baseline experiment using the line comparison test.

Results: When there was one confederate, the real participants conformed on just 3% of the critical trials. When the group size increased to two confederates, the real participants conformed on 12.8% of the critical trials. When there were three confederates, the real participants conformed on 32% of the critical trials (the same as Asch's baseline experiment).

Conclusion: This study suggests that conformity reaches its highest level with just three confederates. Asch continued investigating group size and in one condition he used 15 confederates and found the rate of conformity slightly dropped. This could be because the real participants became suspicious of the experiment and not because the pressure to conform is less, in larger groups.

### Unanimity

Aim: To see what happens to conformity levels when the group's unanimous position is broken.

Method: In one variation, one of the confederates was instructed to give the correct answer throughout, whereas in another variation, one of the confederates gave a different incorrect answer to the majority. All participants experienced the same line comparison test.

Results: When the confederate gave the correct answer, conformity dropped to 5%. When the confederate gave the incorrect answer, conformity dropped to 9%.

Conclusion: This shows that if you break the group's unanimous position, conformity is reduced, even if the answer provided by the supporter, is still incorrect.

**Task Difficulty**

Aim: To see how increasing the difficulty of the task affects conformity.

Method: The same line comparison test was used but this variation made the task more difficult, by making the difference between the line lengths significantly smaller.

Results: Participants gave more incorrect answers, increasing the rate of conformity.

Conclusion: Conformity increased probably due to informational social influence (ISI), as people will look to others for guidance when they are unsure.

**Review**

Task Difficulty: Does the task difficulty affect conformity levels? Asch found the more difficult the task, the greater the conformity.

Unanimity: Does the presence of a non-conforming person affect conformity levels? Asch found the presence of a dissenter, decreases conformity.

Group Size: Does increasing the size of the group affect levels of conformity? Asch found with 2 confederates, conformity occurred on 12.8% of trials, and when at least 3 confederates were used, conformity rose to 32%.

**Evaluation**

As participants were invited into a lab setting, they may have changed their behaviour to please the researchers, therefore there is an increased risk of demand characteristics.

The variation samples were all culturally biased, as they were all from the USA. The samples used in the variation experiments were not representative as they were mostly students (also lack population validity).

Deception was broken in the variation studies as with the baseline experiment, as participants were led to believe the confederates were real participants.

The variation studies are reliable as they were all conducted in a lab setting with high controls and standardised procedures for all participants.

The findings from the variation studies (conducted in the 1950s) may not reflect how people would behave today, therefore they lack temporal validity. Also the samples in the variation studies do not represent of the wider population as many were American students, so they lack population validity. As the research was conducted as lab experiments, ecological validity is low, as the artificial setting does not represent real life. In addition, mundane realism is low, as the tasks the participants were asked to complete do not reflect those they would experience in everyday life.

Supporting evidence from;

Jenness (1932) found that participants will change their original answer, when they see the responses of others and are provided with another opportunity to estimate the number of beans in the glass bottle.

Lucas et al (2006) found that participants given easy and hard maths questions are likely to conform when the problems are harder. This supports task difficulty as a variable affecting conformity.

Conflicting evidence from;

Bond & Smith (1996) highlight the differences between individualistic and collectivist cultures. Individualistic cultures like the USA are more concerned about themselves rather than the group. This might explain why conformity rates in collectivist cultures like China are higher.

Neto (1995) suggests that women may be more conformist as they are more concerned with social relationships and feelings of acceptance.

Fiske (2014) criticised the realism of the task, stating the groups do not resemble those we experience in real life. This limits the real-world applications.

## Conforming to Social Roles

### Haney, Banks & Zimbardo (1973)

Aim: To examine conformity to social roles in a mock prison environment in the basement of Stanford University.

Sample: 24 male university students who volunteered and were randomly assigned to roles of prisoners or guards.

Method: Prisoners were arrested at their homes/ places of work by local police. They were striped, deloused and given ID numbers and smocks. Guards were given a uniform and sunglasses, then instructed to run the prison without physical violence.

Results: Prisoners rebelled but were quickly suppressed by the guards as they became increasingly abusive towards the prisoners. Five prisoners released early due to adverse reactions (pathological prisoner syndrome). Experiment terminated after six days due to inhumane conditions.

Conclusion: Zimbardo concluded that people quickly conform to social roles, even against their moral principles. Situational factors largely responsible for the observed behaviour. People can easily become cruel and evil when they feel anonymous and have power over depersonalised others (pathology of power). This was seen in the behaviour of the guards and aided by the fact they wore sunglasses.

### Evaluation

Generalisation: The sample were all American men so cannot be generalised to other cultures (ethnocentric). The sample included only 24 participants so is not representative of the wider population. It included only 24 participants so is not representative of the wider population (lacks population validity).

Reliability: The study was carried out in an artificial environment at Stanford University with some experimental controls, however, would be difficult to replicate. The mock prison could be designed in a similar way, but the results may not be consistent with Zimbardo's.

Reicher and Haslam (2006) replicated Zimbardo's research by randomly assigning 15 men to the role of prisoner or guard. In this replication, the participants did not conform to their social roles.

Validity: The study lacks population validity as only male students from the USA were used. This does not represent the wider population. The study is criticised for its lack of ecological validity. Banuazizi & Movahedi (1975) argued participants were play-acting in the mock prison, not adopting a social role.

Reicher and Haslam (2006) replicated the study for the BBC and found that participants did not adopt the social roles of prisoner and guard. This suggests the study lacks reliability as well as temporal validity.

McDermott (2019) suggested the study did replicate the social roles of prisoners and guards. One 'prisoner 416' later said he believed the prison to be real. This argues the study has high ecological validity as the setting was very realistic for the participants.

There are several ways this study is useful, in helping our understanding of conformity to social roles. The study helps our understanding of social power, deindividuation and powerlessness. We have a better understanding of how people become influenced by their social roles. The police, prison service and others in positions of power need to be aware of the influence their social role might have on their behaviour.

Ethical issues: Zimbardo gave participants a debriefing after the experiment but admitted he became absorbed in his role of prison governor. Confidentiality was broken as the participants were video and audio recorded throughout the experiment. Protection from harm was also an issue for the participants playing the guards. Some reported feelings of anxiety and guilt, as a result of their actions. Protection from harm was also broken as many participants suffered negative effects from their experience in the study. Five of the prisoners left the experiment early because of their adverse reactions to the physical and mental torment. Right to withdraw was broken as participants were led to believe they could not leave the experiment. This was particularly true for prisoners who were locked in cells. Deception was broken as participants were led to believe that the mock prison was real. Informed Consent was broken as prisoners were arrested without prior knowledge from their homes/ places of work.

Dispositional factors: Personality characteristics such as an Authoritarian Personality may explain some of the findings. These personality types value authority and prefer to follow the rules. This may influence their likelihood to conform. Stereotypes may also have influenced participants levels of conformity. One of the guards claimed he based his role on a character from the film 'Cool Hand Luke'. Individual differences can also play a part, as some participants may have personalities more inclined to conform. Fromm (1973) suggested individual differences may have affected the results, as only one-third of the guards acted in a brutal manner.

## Minority Influence

Minority influence refers to situations where one person or a small group, influence the beliefs or behaviours of others. Moscovici et al (1969) studied minority influence using blue and green coloured slides.

Moscovici (1969) conducted a re-run of Asch's experiment, but in reverse. Instead of one real participant amongst a majority of confederates, he placed two confederates together with four genuine participants. They were then 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 first part of the experiment, the two confederates answered green for each of the 36 slides. They were totally consistent in their responses. In the second part of the experiment, they answered green 24 times and blue 12 times. The results showed that the consistent minority had an effect on the majority (8.42%) compared to an inconsistent minority (only 1.25% said green). A third (32%) of all participants judged the slide to be green at least once. This supports the view that minority groups can influence majority views to change.

There are three main factors associated with minority influence;

Commitment is when a minority must demonstrate commitment to their cause (augmentation principle) through actions. This is more effective if people demonstrate some kind of sacrifice.

Consistency is another factor, where the minority must be consistent in their views to change other people's opinions.

Flexibility is the last factor, when a minority must be willing to accept the views of others but essentially stick to their own consistent view.

For these factors to influence a majority, the minority must engage in all three. When a minority has an effective message, it creates conflict in the minds of the majority. Conflict is more likely if the minority are consistent, flexible, committed and have made sacrifices (augmentation principle).

When a minority has influence to start a movement of others, they can make a change to become a majority. Martin Luther King spoke as a minority but soon challenged the American government and created a snowball effect. Consistency, sacrifices, and group membership are factors that determine the success of a minority in facilitating social change.

Having similarity in terms of group membership increases the likelihood of minority influence. Minority groups play an important role in facilitating social change by influencing an entire society to change their attitude, behaviours and beliefs. The snowball effect can be seen, when a minority view grows over time, by picking up momentum.

**Evaluation**

Most supporting studies for minority influence lack external validity, as often the situation and tasks do not reflect real life.

Supporting evidence from;

Moscovici et al (1969) found that minorities with consistent views can influence others to change their opinions.

Wood et al (1994) carried out a meta-analysis of 100 studies and found that minorities who are consistent are most influential.

Martin et al (2003) suggest a change in majority views involves deeper processing of a minority's ideas.

## Social Change

Consistent minorities are more likely to convince a majority to change their attitudes or beliefs. Examples of social change, such as the civil rights movement and the suffragette movement, demonstrate the importance of consistency, sacrifices, and group membership in facilitating social change.

Minorities that make sacrifices, such as imprisonment or death, are more influential in driving social change. During the civil rights movement in America, 'freedom riders' were mixed ethnic groups who boarded buses in the south, challenging racial segregation. Personal risk indicates a strong belief and reinforces (augments) that person's message. This may include making life threatening sacrifices.

As the minority influence increases and more of the population conform to the minority belief, it can become the majority belief. This often picks up pace, converting more and more people to the minority belief in a shorter and shorter space of time; this is known as the snowball effect.

Most societies have social norms which govern the rules for how people behave, and most people adhere to these norms. NSI is one way in which a majority conforms to the norms of society. Most people do not want to feel ostracised or ridiculed. Studies like Asch have demonstrated how majority influence could impact on social change.

Nolan et al (2008) showed how majority influence can lead to social change in her experiment about changing energy use habits in the USA. However, Foxcroft et al (2015) dismiss the idea of NSI in social change. They reviewed social norm interventions for reducing alcohol intake in over 70 studies but found only a small reduction in alcohol intake.

## Obedience

Obedience is seen when people obey the orders of those with higher social status or authority. Milgram (1963) conducted an experiment using an electric shock generator, asking volunteers to give a potentially fatal shock to another person. They gradually moved up the scale in small 15-volt increments. He found that 65% of participants went to the maximum 450 volts when ordered by an authority figure.

### Milgram's original experiment

Aim: Milgram wanted to investigate if ordinary American citizens would obey an unjust order from an authority figure. The experiment took place at the prestigious Yale University.

Sample: 40 white, males aged 20-50 years from New Haven, USA who volunteered for the experiment.

Method: The participants were assigned the role of teacher and were instructed to administer electric shocks to a learner. The learner was not actually strapped to the electric chair and gave predetermined answers to questions. Each participant was paid to take part. The shocks increased in 15 voltage increments to a maximum of 450 volts. Participants were asked to shock every incorrect answer. If they hesitated, they were given verbal prods from the experimenter.

Results: 100% of all participants went to 300 volts. 65% of participants continued administering shocks until the maximum voltage of 450 volts.

Conclusion: Milgram concluded that under the right circumstances, ordinary people will obey unjust orders, even if it means harming another person. This shows the power of legitimate authority.

**Evaluation**

This study supports the Agency Theory (Milgram, 1977).

Generalisation: The sample were all males which is gender biased (androcentric). The sample was small with only 40 participants making generalisation more difficult. The sample were also all American, so is culturally biased (ethnocentric). Therefore the sample is not representative of the wider population (lacks population validity).

Reliability: This was high as the experiment was carried out under strictly controlled conditions in the lab. There was high control over extraneous variables, increasing the reliability of the study. Each participant went through the same standardised procedure, increasing the reliability and subsequent replication.

Applications to Real Life: This study provides a useful understanding of the power of people in positions of legitimate authority. It could help us understand 'blind obedience' and why Nazi soldiers acted that way in WW2. Also provides practical applications and advice for how we need to be aware of the power of authority. There are useful applications for the police, prison officers or those in a position of legitimate authority.

Validity: The study has high internal validity as it was strictly controlled, and the findings show the manipulation from the authority figure caused changes in the results. The study lacks ecological validity, as the setting is artificial and does not reflect real life. In addition, the task lacked mundane realism, as participants would not ordinarily electrocute another person. The study may lack temporal validity, as more recent replications have not provided the same results. Moreover, the study lacks population validity as the sample is not representative of the wider population.

Ethics:

Informed Consent: Participants were not told the true nature of the study, so did not give full informed consent.

Deception: Participants were led to believe the learner was a real participant and roles were assigned fairly. They were also led to believe the electric shock generator was real. The participants believed the experiment was for scientific benefit, as the researcher was wearing a lab coat and it took place at the prestigious Yale University.

Right to Withdraw: Participants were not given the right to withdraw immediately, they had to ask four times before they were allowed to stop. The verbal prods were given in a standardised order from the experimenter.

Confidentiality: Participants were video, and audio recorded during the experiment, but their names were not published.

Protection from Harm: Participants suffered from moral strain and showed high levels of anxiety. Some participants showed physical signs of distress (psychosomatic rash/ twitching/ agitation).

Debriefing: Participants were offered support for months following the study.

Supporting evidence from;

Meeus and Raaijmakers (1986) who conducted a cross-cultural variation and found 91.7% of participants obeyed orders from an authority figure.

Mantell (1971) replicated Milgram's study in Germany and found 85% of participants went to 450 volts. This shows cultural differences.

Kilham & Mann (1974) found that only 16% of Australian women went all the way to 450 volts in a replication of Milgram's study. This also shows cultural differences.

**Legitimate Authority**

People in positions of legitimate authority exercise social power over others. Legitimacy of authority can be seen in situational cues such as uniform. In one of Milgram's variations, where a person dressed in normal clothes was giving orders to participants, only 20% of participants obeyed, compared to 65% in the original study. Bickman (1974) also investigated the power of uniform in a field experiment conducted in New York. He found that guards were obeyed on 76% of occasions, whereas a milkman and normal pedestrians were obeyed less (47% and 30% respectfully).

**Agency Theory**

Milgram devised the Agency Theory (1974) to explain why obedience to authority may occur. When we are responsible for our own actions with the freedom to choose how we may behave, we are in an autonomous state. When a person changes from autonomous state to an agentic state, they have undergone an agentic shift. In Milgram's original experiment, the participants were told that the experimenter had full responsibility and therefore they could act as an agent, carrying out the experimenter's orders.

So an agentic state is when an individual carries out the orders of an authority figure and acts as their agent, with little personal responsibility. An agent for authority may experience moral strain but may feel powerless to stop.

Supporting evidence from;

Milgram (1963) in his original study found that 65% of the participants went to the maximum 450 volts, supporting the agency theory.

Hofling (1966) found that 21/22 nurses would administer a dangerous drug to a patient, just because a doctor ordered them to do so.

Conflicting evidence from;

Rank & Jacobson (1977) criticised the agency theory as they found 16/18 nurses would disobey a doctor's orders if it meant harming a patient.

Dispositional Factors: Psychologists have examined dispositional (internal) factors that also contribute to obedience. One factor is the authoritarian personality type, which has been associated with higher levels of obedience. The authoritarian personality refers to a person who has extreme respect for authority and is more likely to be obedient to those who hold power over them. Adorno et al (1950) developed a questionnaire called the California F scale, to measure levels of authoritarian personality. Adorno et al (1950) studied more than 2000 middle class, white Americans and found a strong correlation between authoritarian personality and prejudice.

Elms and Milgram (1966) suggest a link between authoritarian personality and obedience. They found that the obedient participants scored higher on the F scale, in comparison to disobedient participants. However, the F scale only collects quantitative data, so lacks external validity. In addition, the F scale suffers from response bias or social desirability, where participants may provide answers that are socially acceptable.

Christie & Jahoda (1954) argued that the F scale is politically biased and measures more extreme views of right-wing ideology. This does not necessarily mean those individuals will be more obedient.

Middendorp & Meloen (1990) found that less-educated people are more likely to display authoritarian personality characteristics, suggesting this is why they may be seen as more obedient.

## Situational Variables influencing Obedience

### Proximity

When a buffer, like a wall is used, obedience levels are seen to be higher, as participants cannot see the direct consequences of their actions. In Milgram's original research the teacher and the learner were in separate rooms. Here the obedience levels were 65%.

In Milgram's variation where the experimenter left the room and gave telephone instructions, obedience dropped to 20.5%. In Milgram's variation with 'touch proximity' where teachers had to put learners' hands on an electric shock plate, obedience levels dropped to 30%. Milgram's variation where the teacher and learner were seated in the same room, found that obedience levels dropped to 40%.

The variations investigating proximity were done under controlled conditions in the lab, so have high reliability.

### Location

If the location is perceived to have more scientific status or prestige, people are more likely to obey. Milgram conducted his original research in a laboratory of Yale University and found 65% obeyed.

Less credible locations can result in reduced levels of obedience. Milgram conducted a variation in a run-down office building in Bridgeport, USA and found obedience levels dropped to 47.5%.

Modigliani & Rochat (1995) reviewed the transcripts from Milgram's variation at the run-down office block, and found the earlier people protested, the less likely they were to obey.

**Uniform**

People in authority wearing uniform are more likely to gain respect and obedience from others. Milgram's experiment found 65% of participants obeyed to the experimenter wearing the scientific lab coat.

Bickman (1974) investigated the power of uniform in a field experiment conducted in New York. He found that guards were obeyed on 76% of occasions, whereas a milkman and normal pedestrians were obeyed less (47% and 30% respectfully).

**Evaluation**

Milgram's research supports a situational explanation of obedience (proximity, uniform, location).

This idea also supports the nurture side of the debate, in that external, environmental factors influence our behaviour.

However, as most of the supporting research is conducted in lab settings, it lacks ecological validity. There could also be a risk of demand characteristics when testing situational variables in the lab.

Mandel (1998) argues against situational variables being responsible for people's actions as they ignore dispositional factors like personality.

**Explanations of Resistance to Social Influence**

**Social Support**

People can resist the pressure to conform or obey if they have an ally, someone supporting their point of view. Having an ally can build confidence and allow individuals to remain independent.

In his line comparison test Asch (1955) showed how an ally or dissenter can help people resist conformity.

In Milgram's variation, he showed how obedience levels drop when there is a disobedient confederate.

Allen & Levine (1971) showed that social support can help individuals resist group influence. In an Asch-like task when the dissenter was someone with good eyesight, 64% of genuine participants refused to conform and only 3% resisted when there was no support.

Albrecht et al (2006) evaluated Teen Fresh Start USA, an eight week programme to help pregnant adolescents resist peer pressure to smoke. Social support was provided by an older ‘buddy’.

Albrecht et al (2006) showed how having a non-smoking 'buddy' helps young people resist smoking.

Gamson et al (1982) asked participants to produce evidence that would be used to help an oil company run a smear campaign.

Gamson et al (1982) showed how peer support can lead to disobedience, undermining the legitimacy of authority. They found that 88% rebelled against their orders, probably because they had others in a group to discuss it with.

## Locus of Control

Locus of control is the degree to which people believe that they, as opposed to external forces (beyond their influence), have control over the outcome of events in their lives. The concept was developed by Rotter (1954). People who are more self-confident, higher achievers tend to resist social influence pressure more.

Locus of control (LOC) can be on a continuum; some people are in the middle of the scale with characteristics of both.

The Locus of Control Test is a questionnaire developed by Rotter (1966). It measures generalised expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement.

People with high external locus of control are more likely to conform or obey. People with high internal locus of control are more likely to resist pressures to conform or obey. Therefore, a person with an internal locus of control believes that he/she can influence events and their outcomes, while someone with an external locus of control blames outside forces for everything.

Holland (1967) measured the LOC of his participants and then replicated Milgram's study. He found 37% of internals did not continue to maximum voltage compared to 23% of externals. This supports the idea of LOC but suggests it is not the only reason for resistance to social influence.

Twenge et al (2004) criticise the idea of LOC following the review of 40 years of data, showing people became more resistant and more external over time. This contradicts previous research.

Rotter (1982) argues that LOC is not the most important factor in determining resistance, it can depend on the situation.

## Minority Influence

Minority influence refers to situations where one person or a small group, influence the beliefs or behaviours of others.

Minority influence is most likely to lead to internalisation, where someone changes both their public and private beliefs.

Moscovici et al (1969) conducted a re-run of Asch's experiment, but in reverse. Instead of one real participant amongst a majority of confederates, he placed two confederates together with four genuine participants.

In Moscovici's study, participants were shown 36 slides which were clearly different shades of blue and asked to state the colour of each slide out loud.

Moscovici showed that the consistent minority had an effect on the majority (8.42%) compared to an inconsistent minority (1.25%). A third (32%) of all participants incorrectly judged the slide to be green at least once.

Moscovici et al (1969) found that minorities with consistent views can influence others to change their opinions.

Several factors have been identified in the process of minority influence; consistency, commitment and flexibility.

Consistency is when the minority must be consistent in their views to change other people's opinions.

Over time consistency increases the amount of interest from other people.

Consistency can take the form of agreement between people in the minority group, known as synchronic consistency (all saying the same thing). Or can show consistency over time, known as diachronic consistency (all saying the same thing, for some time now).

A consistent minority makes people rethink their own views over time, which can lead to change.

Wood et al (1994) carried out a meta-analysis of 100 studies and found that minorities who are consistent are most influential.

Commitment is when a minority must demonstrate commitment to their cause (augmentation principle) through actions.

Some individuals will show commitment to the cause through personal sacrifice or genuine struggle. It is important that these extreme activities present some risk to the minority to show greater commitment.

Commitment is more effective if people demonstrate sacrifice to the cause.

Flexibility is when a minority must be willing to accept other views but sticks to their own consistent view.

Nemeth (1986) argued that someone seen to be inflexible and dogmatic may not change the opinions of others. Instead he argued that members of a minority need to be prepared to adapt their point of view and accept reasonable and valid counterarguments.

All three of the factors make people think about the minority's view or cause but it is suggested that deeper processing is needed to incur real change.

Martin et al (2003) suggest a change in majority views involves deeper processing of a minority's ideas.

Mackie (1987) presents evidence that majority influence may create deeper processing about minority views.

Most supporting studies for minority influence lack external validity, as often the situation and tasks do not reflect real life.

## Social Change

### Majority Influence

Most societies have social norms which govern the rules for how people behave, and most people adhere to these norms.

NSI is one way in which a majority conforms to the norms of society. Most people do not want to feel ostracised or ridiculed.

Studies like Asch have demonstrated how majority influence could impact on social change.

Nolan et al (2008) showed how majority influence can lead to social change in her experiment about changing energy use habits in the USA.

Nolan et al (2008) aimed to see if they could change people's energy use habits. They placed messages on doors every week for one month, stating that other residents in the area were using less energy.

Nolan et al (2008) found significant decreases in energy uses when compared to a control group, suggesting that conformity lead to this social change.

Foxcroft et al (2015) dismiss the idea of NSI in social change. They reviewed social norm interventions for reducing alcohol intake in over 70 studies but found only a small reduction in alcohol intake.

**Minority Influence**

Consistency, sacrifices, and group membership are factors that determine the success of a minority in facilitating social change.

Consistent minorities are more likely to convince a majority to change their attitudes or beliefs.

Examples of social change, such as the civil rights movement and the suffragette movement, demonstrate the importance of consistency, sacrifices, and group membership in facilitating social change.

Minorities that make sacrifices, such as imprisonment or death, are more influential in driving social change.

Personal risk indicates a strong belief and reinforces (augments) that person's message. This may include making life threatening sacrifices.

During the civil rights movement in America, 'freedom riders' were mixed ethnic groups who boarded buses in the south, challenging racial segregation.

Similarity group membership can increase the likelihood of minority influence.

Minority groups play an important role in facilitating social change by influencing an entire society to change their attitude, behaviours and beliefs.

As the minority influence increases and more of the population conform to the minority belief, it can become the majority belief. This often picks up pace, converting more and more people to the minority belief in a shorter and shorter space of time; this is known as the Snowball effect.

Snowball effect is when the minority view grows over time, by picking up momentum.

When a minority has influence to start a movement of others, they make a change to become a majority. Martin Luther King spoke as a minority but soon challenged the American government and created a snowball effect.

The timescale for minority influence to work takes a long time, as most groups conform to the majority position.

If minority groups are perceived as having extreme views, it can limit their movement in the short-term.

Some minority groups display negative or anti-social views or behaviour which limits their access to the majority.

Nemeth (2009) claims that social change is the result of the type of thinking minorities inspire. A minority may engage in more diverse, wider discussion promoting divergent thinking.

Bashir et al (2013) state that there are many barriers to social change and many people still resist. For example, they found that participants were less likely to behave in environmentally friendly ways because they did not want to be associated with the minority activists.

**Obedience**

Milgram (1963) demonstrated the importance of disobedient role models in his variation studies. When someone refuses to obey, others are more likely to follow suit and disobey.

Zimbardo (2007) suggest that obedience can be used to create social change through the process of gradual commitment. Once people begin to follow orders and obey, it is much harder for them to stop. This is known as the 'foot-in-the-door' effect.