

Explanations of Resistance to Social Influence;

Social Support – the presence of other people who resist pressures to conform or obey can help others to do the same. These individuals act as models or allies to show that resistance to social influence is possible.

Locus of Control – refers to the trait of personality which directs events in our lives. Internal locus of controlled individuals believe they are responsible for their actions so take accountability for their own behaviour. Whereas, external locus of controlled individuals believe that external factors are responsible for their actions, and that they cannot be held accountable for their behaviour.

Social Support

In one of Milgram's variations another confederate was used as an ally for the real participant who was instructed to disobey. In this experiment obedience levels dropped to 10% which shows that having social support can increase the chances of resistance to social influence. In addition, Allen and Levine (1971) replicated the Asch line comparison test and found that conformity decreased when there was a dissenter in the group. This seems to allow the real participant the opportunity to give their true opinion and resist social influence.

Locus of Control

Internal locus of control is the belief that you are responsible for the outcome of your life, if you pass your A-level Psychology exam you may argue it was due to your own hard work, or the hours you spent revising or the exam skill you practised beforehand. However, an external locus of control would be the belief that other factors or people are responsible for your behaviour. If you were to fail your A-level exams, you would blame the teacher or the exam paper not giving you questions you could answer easily.

Rotter (1966) proposed the concept of locus of control and devised a questionnaire aimed at identifying whether people were internal or external locus of controlled.

People who have an internal locus of control are more likely to be able to resist social influence. Holland (1967) repeated Milgram's baseline experiment and measured whether participants were internal or externally locus of controlled. It was found that 37% of internals did not continue to obey and give the maximum shock, whereas only 23% of externals discontinued the experiment. This indicated that their locus of control could be responsible for their actions.

