AQA Psychology A-level

Topic 1: Social Influence

Notes

Part 1: Types of conformity and Explanations for Conformity

Conformity is a type of social influence

It is defined as *'yielding to group pressures'*.

It is also defined as *'a change in a person's behaviour or opinion as a result of a real or imagined pressure from a person or group of people'*, where an imagined pressure is when there are no consequences for not conforming and a real pressure is when there are consequences for conforming.

Kelman proposed 3 types of conformity:

Internalisation = Making the beliefs, values, attitude and behaviour of the group your own (the strongest type of conformity, and often occurs as a result of informational social influence). An individual's change of view is permanent e.g. being brought up in a religious household, and becoming religious yourself.

Identification = Temporary/short term change of behaviour and beliefs only in the presence of a group (middle level) e.g. acting more professional and less silly when you arrive at your office to work.

Compliance = This means to follow other people's ideas/to go along with the group to gain their approval or avoid disapproval. You publically agree but privately disagree (lowest/ weakest level of conformity) An individual's change of view is temporary and is likely to occur as a result of normative social influence e.g. when friends pressure you into drinking alcohol when you don't truly want to, and will not drink outside of such social situations.

Informational Social Influence - When someone conforms because they want to be right, so they look to others by copying or obeying them, to have the right answer in a situation; when a person is uncertain or unsure, they would look to others for information. It usually leads to internalisation and occurs in situations where we do not have the knowledge or expertise to make our own decisions e.g. a person following the direction of the crowd in an emergency, even though they don't actually know where they are going, as they assume that everyone else is going to the right place.

Evidence – Fein et al. asked participants to vote for a US presidential candidate after they saw others voting for somebody else. Most of the participants changed their mind because they wanted to be 'correct', thus demonstrating the impact of informational social influence as a mechanism for conformity.

Normative Social Influence – when someone conforms because they want to be liked and be part of a group; when a person's need to be accepted or have approval from a group drives compliance. It often occurs when a person wants to avoid the embarrassing situation of disagreeing with the majority.
e.g. a person starting to smoke because they are surrounded by other people who smoke

+ There is evidence supporting the link between NSI and bullying, thus suggesting a real-life application with an increased understanding of the different types of conformity. Garandeau and Cillissen found that a boy can be manipulated by a bully into victimising another child because the bully provides a common goal for the boy's group of friends, the goal is to victimise the other child, so the boy would most likely also victimise the child to avoid disapproval from his friends.

+ There is also evidence to support the role of informational social influence. For example, Lucas et al found that conformity to an obviously incorrect maths answer was greater when the question was more difficult and the participant rated their own maths ability unfavourably. This shows that individuals are more likely to turn to others when they lack the information to make their own informed decisions i.e. in an ambiguous situation.

— NSI and ISI may not be completely exclusive, as suggested by Deutsch and Gerrard's 'Two Process Model'. For example, a dissenting confederate can provide social support, thus reducing the effect of NSI through providing the naive participant with a supporting, similar view. Equally, this can also reduce the effect of ISI through the confederate proving the participant with an alternative source of information. This means that it may be more beneficial to look at NSI and ISI as complementary, as opposed to mutually exclusive mechanisms.

Part 2: Variables affecting conformity: group size, unanimity and task difficulty as investigated by Asch

Asch's study

Participants	123 male American undergraduates in groups of 6; consisting of 1 true participant and 5 confederates (actors/people in on the experiment)
Aim	• To investigate conformity and majority influence
Procedure	• Participants and confederates were presented with 4 lines; 3 comparison lines and 1 standard line • They asked to state which of three lines was the same length as a stimulus line • The real participant always answered last or second to last • Confederates would give the same incorrect answer for 12 out of 18 trials • Asch observed how often the participant would give the same incorrect answer as the confederates versus the correct answer
Findings	36.8% conformed 25% never conformed 75% conformed at least once In a control trial, only 1% of responses given by participants were incorrect (which eliminates eyesight/perception as an extraneous variable, thus increasing the validity of the conclusions drawn)

Factors affecting level of conformity	**Size of majority/Group size** Point: An individual is more likely to conform when in a larger group. Evidence: There was low conformity with group size of confederates were less than 3 - any more than 3 and the conformity rose by 30% Explanation: a person is more likely to conform if all members of the group are in agreement and give the same answer, because it will increase their confidence in correctness of the group, and decrease their confidence in their own answer. Conformity does not seem to increase in groups larger than four so this is considered the optimal group size. Link: This shows that the majority must be at least 3 to exert an influence, but an overwhelming majority is not needed in all instances to bring about conformity. N.B. The PEEL structure is particularly important when describing studies, to demonstrate a deeper understanding through making links with the essay question. This is particularly necessary when trying to achieve the top band! **Unanimity of majority** Point: An individual is more likely to conform when the group is unanimous i.e. all give the same answer, as opposed to them all giving different answers. Evidence: When joined by another participant or disaffected confederate who gave the correct answer, conformity fell from 32% to 5.5%. If different answers are given, it falls from 32% to 9%. Explanation: the more unanimous the group is, the more confidence the participant will have that they are all correct, and therefore the participant's answer is more likely to be incorrect Link: Unanimity is vital in establishing a consistent majority view, which is particularly important by providing normative social influence through preventing any conflicting views arising. **Task Difficulty** Point: An individual is more likely to conform when the task is difficult Evidence: For example, Asch altered the (comparison) lines (e.g. A, B, C) making them more similar in length. Since it was harder to judge the correct answer conformity increased. Evidence: When the task is difficult, we are more uncertain of our answer so we look to others for confirmation. The more difficult the task the greater the conformity. Link: This suggests that informational social influence is a major mechanism for conformity when the situation is ambiguous and the individual does not have enough of their own knowledge or information to make an informed decision independently, and so has to look towards others.

Evaluation	**Strengths**
	High internal validity - There was strict control over extraneous variables, such as timing of assessment and the type of task used. The participants did the experiment before without confederates to see if they actually knew the correct answer, thus removing the confounding variable of a lack of knowledge. This suggests that valid and reliable 'cause and effect' relationships can be established, as well as valid conclusions. Lab experiment - Extraneous and confounding variables are strictly controlled, meaning that replication of the experiment is easy. Successful replication increases the reliability of the findings because it reduces the likelihood that the observed findings were a 'one-off'. Ethical issues - The researchers breached the BPS ethical guideline of deception and consequently, the ability to give informed consent. However, the participants were debriefed. Ethical issues do not threaten the validity or reliability of findings, but rather suggest that a cost-benefit analysis is required. Supports normative social influence - participants reported that they conformed to fit in with the group, so it supports the idea of normative influence, which states that people conform to fit in when privately disagreeing with the majority.
	Weaknesses Lacks ecological validity - it was based on peoples' perception of lines and so the findings cannot be generalised to real life as it does not reflect the complexity of real life conformity i.e. where there are many other confounding variables and majorities exert influence irrespective of being a large group. Lacks population validity due to sampling issues - For example, the participants were only American male undergraduates, and so the study was subject to gender bias, where it is assumed that findings from male participants can be generalised to females (i.e. beta bias). Ethical issues: - there was deception as participants were tricked into thinking the study was about perception rather than compliance so they could not give informed consent. - There could have been psychological harm as the participants could have been embarrassed after realising the true aims of the study. - Such issues simply mean that a cost-benefit analysis is required to evaluate whether the ethical costs are smaller than the benefits of increased knowledge of the field. They do not affect the validity or reliability of findings! Lacked validity - The social context of the 1950s may have affected results. For example, Perrin and Spencer criticised the study by stating that the period that the experiment was conducted in influenced the results because it was an anti-Communist period in America when people were more scared to be different i.e. McCarthyism. Thus, the study can be said to lack temporal validity because the findings cannot be generalised across all time periods.

Part 3: Conformity to Social Roles, as investigated by Zimbardo

Zimbardo's study

Participants	24 American male undergraduate students
Aim	To investigate how readily people would conform to the social roles in a simulated environment, and specifically, to investigate why 'good people do bad things'.
Procedure	The basement of the Stanford University psychology building was converted into a simulated prison. American student volunteers were paid to take part in the study. They were randomly issued one of two roles; guard or prisoner. Both prisoners and guards had to wear uniforms. Prisoners were only referred to by their assigned number. Guards were given props like handcuffs and sunglasses (to make eye contact with prisoners impossible and to reinforce the boundaries between the two social roles within the established social hierarchy). No one was allowed to leave the simulated prison. Guards worked eight hour shifts, while the others remained on call. Prisoners were only allowed in the hallway which acted as their yard, and to the toilet. The guards were allowed to control such behaviour, in order to emphasise their complete power over the prisoners! No physical violence was permitted, in line with ethical guidelines and to prevent complete overruling. The behaviour of the participants was observed.
Findings	Identification occurred very fast, as both the prisoners and guards adopted their new roles and played their part in a short amount of time, despite the apparent disparity between the two social roles. Guards began to harass and torment prisoners in harsh and aggressive ways – they later reported to have enjoyed doing so and relished in their new-found power and control. Prisoners would only talk about prison issues (forgetting about their previous real life), and snitch on other prisoners to the guards to please them. This is significant evidence to suggest that the prisoners believed that the prison was real, and were not acting simply due to demand characteristics. They would even defend the guards when other prisoners broke the rules, reinforcing their social roles as prisoner and guard, despite it not being real. The guards became more demanding of obedience and assertiveness towards the prisoners while the prisoners become more submissive. This suggests that the respective social roles became increasingly internalised.

Evaluation	**Strengths:** Real life applications – This research changed the way US prisons are run e.g. young prisoners are no longer kept with adult prisoners to prevent the bad behaviour perpetuating. Beehive-style prisons, where all cells are under constant surveillance from a central monitoring unit, are also not used in modern times, due to such setups increasing the effects of institutionalisation and over exaggerating the differences in social roles between prisoners and guards. Debriefing – participants were fully and completely debriefed about the aims and results of the study. This is particularly important when considering that the BPS ethical guidelines of deception and informed consent had been breached. Dealing with ethical issues in this way simply makes the study more ethically acceptable, but does not change the quality (in terms of validity and reliability) of the findings. The amount of ethical issues with the study led to the formal recognition or ethical guidelines so that future studies were safer and less harmful to participants due to legally bound rules. This demonstrates the practical application of an increased understanding of the mechanisms of conformity and the variables which affect this.

Weaknesses:
Lacks ecological validity - The study suffered from demand characteristics. For example, the participants knew that they were participating in a study and therefore may have changed their behaviour, either to please the experimenter (a type of demand characteristic) or in response to being observed (participant reactivity, which acts as a confounding variable). The participants also knew that the study was not real so they claimed that they simply acted according to the expectations associated with their role rather genuinely adopting it. This was seen particularly with qualitative data gathered from an interview with one guard, who said that he based his performance from the stereotypical guard role portrayed in the film Cool Hand Luke, thus further reducing the validity of the findings

Lacks population validity – The sample only consisted of American male students and so the findings cannot be generalised to other genders and cultures. For example, collectivist cultures, such as China or Japan, may be more conformist to their prescribed social roles because such cultures value the needs of the group over the needs of the individual. This suggests that such findings may be culture-bound!

Ethical issues:
Lack of fully informed consent due to the deception required to (theoretically) avoid demand characteristics and participant reactivity. However Zimbardo himself did not know what was going to happen, so could not inform the participants, meaning that there is possible justification for a breach of ethical guidelines.
Psychological harm – Participants were not protected from stress, anxiety, emotional distress and embarrassment e.g. one prisoner had to be released due to excess distress and uncontrollable screaming and crying. One prisoner was released on the first day due to showing signs of psychological disturbance, with a further two being released on the next day. This study would be deemed unacceptable according to modern ethical standards.

Part 4: Explanations for Obedience: Agentic State, Legitimacy of Authority, and Situational Factors

Agentic state – This is when a person believes that someone else will take responsibility for their own actions. When a person shifts from an autonomous state (the state in which a person believes they will take responsibility for their own actions) to the agentic state, it is called an Agentic Shift. Therefore, agency theory is the idea that people are more likely to obey when they are in the agentic state as they do not believe they will suffer the consequences of those actions. This is because they believe that they are acting on behalf of their agent.

Legitimacy of authority – This describes how credible the figure of authority is. People are more likely to obey them if they are seen as credible in terms of being morally good/right, and legitimate (i.e. legally based or law abiding). This is why students are more likely to listen to their parents or teachers than other unknown adults. In Milgram's study, the people saw the experimenter as legitimate as they knew he was a scientist and therefore is likely to be knowledgeable and responsible - this is called expert authority. This authority was

legitimate (justified) because the researcher held the highest position within the social hierarchy of the experimental scenario.

Situational factors – These include the appearance of the authority figure, the location/ surroundings and proximity (and the role of buffers).

- A person is more likely to obey someone wearing a uniform as it gives them a higher status and a greater sense of legitimacy. It was found that obedience was much higher when the experimenter wore a lab coat as opposed to normal clothes. However, demand characteristics were particularly evident in this condition, with even Milgram admitting that many participants could see through this deception.
- A person is more likely to obey someone in a location linked to higher status and legitimacy. Milgram's study was conducted at a prestigious American university (Yale), and so obedience was greater than in a variation of the study conducted in a rundown office. This is because the prestigious nature of specific locations demand obedience from participants as well as potentially increasing the trust that they place in the researchers.
- A person is more likely to obey when they are less able to see the negative consequences of their actions and are in closer proximity to the authority figure. This is because it increases the pressure to obey and decreases the pressure to resist. In Milgram's study, obedience was higher when the experimenter was in the same room (62.5%) as the participant as opposed to being in a different room and speaking over the phone i.e. the remote instruction condition (20.5% obedience levels).

— Some researchers have suggested that the participants did not acknowledge the electric shocks as real. For example, Gina Perry reviewed the interview tapes and found that a significant number of participants raised questions about the legitimacy of the electric shocks. However, quantitative data gathered by Milgram directly suggested that 70% of participants believed that the shocks were real - these findings appear plausible when considering that 100% of the females used in Sheridan and King's study administered real electric shocks to puppies. This suggests that although the findings were certainly surprising, they were also likely to be accurate.

+ Agentic state and legitimacy of authority theories can be used to successfully explain several real-life examples of obedience towards destructive authority figures. Kilham and Mann put forward the example of the My Lai Massacres, whereby thousands of American soldiers pillaged through Vietnamese villages and murdered civilians. This can be explained in terms of agent state theory, where the soldiers were simply obeying orders from their Generals and so shifted responsibility for their actions onto them. This authority was legitimate (justified) due to their high position within the Army's social hierarchy ranks. Therefore, this suggests that both theories are valid explanations of obedience.

— Milgram's variations, and particularly the removal of a uniform as a situational variable, may have lacked validity i.e. they did not measure what they intended to measure. For example, even Milgram himself admitted that the use of a 'normal citizen' in place of the confederate with a lab coat, may have been too obvious a substitution. Therefore, decreased obedience in this condition may have been due to the participants behaving according to their expectations and so the results were affected by demand characteristics.

Part 5: Variables affecting Obedience including Proximity, Location and Uniform, as investigated by Milgram

Milgram (1963)

Participants	Randomly selected participants - 40 male volunteers.
Aim	To observe whether people would obey a figure of authority when told to harm another person i.e. evaluating the influence of a destructive authority figure.
Procedure	A participant given the role of 'teacher' and a confederate given the role of 'learner'. This was decided through a random allocation. Participant had to ask the confederate a series of questions. Whenever the confederate got the answer wrong, the participant had to give him an electric shock, even when no answer was given. The electric shocks incremented by 15 volts at a time, ranging from 300V to 450V, where 330V was marked as 'lethal'. Participants thought the shocks were real when in fact there were no real shocks administered, and the confederate was acting. The shocks were falsely demonstrated to be real prior to the start of the study. Participants were assessed on how many volts they were willing to shock the confederate with. The experimenter's role was to give a series of orders / prods when the participant refused to administer a shock, which increased in terms of demandingness for every time the participant refused to administer a shock. The same 4 prods were used each time when participants refused to administer the shocks. The first 3 demanded obedience to science, whereas the final prod demanded obedience specifically to the confederate.
Findings	All participants went up to 300V and 65% went up to 450V. No participants stopped below 300V, whilst only 12.5% stopped at 300V, showing that the vast majority of participants were prepared to give lethal electric shocks to a confederate.
Factors affecting obedience	**Proximity** Participants obeyed more when the experimenter was in the same room i.e. 62.5%. This was reduced to 40% when the experimenter and participant were in separate rooms, and reduced to a further 30% in the touch proximity condition i.e. where the experimenter forcibly placed the participant's hand on the electric plate. **Location** Participants obeyed more when the study was conducted at a prestigious university i.e. Stanford. This is because the prestige of such a location demands obedience and also may increase the trust that the participant places in the integrity of the researchers and their experiments. **Uniform** Participants obeyed more when the experimenter wore a lab coat. A person is more likely to obey someone wearing a uniform as it gives them a higher status and a greater sense of legitimacy. It was found that obedience was much higher when the experimenter wore a lab coat as opposed to normal clothes. However, demand characteristics were particularly evident in this condition, with even Milgram admitting that many participants could see through this deception.

| Evaluation | **Strengths**

Debriefing - The participants were thoroughly and carefully debriefed on the real aims of the study, in an attempt to deal with the ethical breach of the guideline of protection from deception and the possibility to give informed consent. In a follow up study conducted a year later, 84% of participants were glad they were part of the study and 74% felt as if they learned something. This suggests that the study left little or no permanent or long-term psychological harm on participants.

Real life applications — This research opened our eyes to the problem of obedience and so may reduce future obedience in response to destructive authority figures e.g. obedience has resulted in negative social change - the Nazis obeyed orders and as a result, Hitler managed to get what he wanted and what he wanted was not what the majority of people wanted. Such research also gives an insight into why people were so willing to kill innocent Jews simply when told to, and so highlights how we can all easily be victims to such pressures. A general awareness of the power of such influences is useful in establishing social order and moral behaviours.

High in internal validity — Gina Perry reviewed the interview tapes and found that a significant number of participants raised questions about the legitimacy of the electric shocks. However, quantitative data gathered by Milgram directly suggested that 70% of participants believed that the shocks were real - these findings appear plausible when considering that 100% of the females used in Sheridan and King's study administered real electric shocks to puppies. This suggests that although the findings were certainly surprising, they were also likely to be accurate.

Highly replicable – The procedure has been repeated all over the world, where consistent and similar obedience levels have been found. For example, in a replication of Milgram's study using the TV pseudonym of Le Jeu de la Mort, researchers found that 85% of participants were willing to give lethal electric shocks to an unconscious man (confederate), whilst being cheered on by a presenter and a TV audience. Such replication increases the reliability of the findings.

External validity has been established by supporting studies – Hofling et al (1966) observed the behaviour of doctors and nurses in a natural experiment (covert observation). The researchers found that 95% of nurses in a hospital obeyed a doctor (confederate) over the phone to increase the dosage of a patient's medicine to double what is advised on the bottle. This suggests that 'everyday' individuals are still susceptible to obeying destructive authority figures. |
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Weaknesses

Ethical issues:
- There was deception and so informed consent could not be obtained. This deception was justified by the aim of avoiding demand characteristics/ the 'Please-U' effect/ participant reactivity (where participants change their behaviour in response to knowing that they are being observed).
- There was psychological harm inflicted upon the participants - They showed signs of psychological and physiological distress such as trembling, sweating and nervous laughter. Such findings were also replicated in the Jeu de la Mort study, showing that these results were not simps due to participant variables/differences.

- It raises a socially sensitive issue – Milgram's findings suggest that those who are responsible for killing innocent people can be excused because it is not their personality that made them do this, but it is because of the situation that they were in and the fact that it is difficult to disobey – some may strongly disagree with this, and especially the judicial system, where (except in viable cases of diminished responsibility), individuals are expected to take moral responsibility for their actions.

- Lack of internal validity – The experiment may have been about trust rather than about obedience because the experiment was held at Stanford University. Therefore, the participants may have trusted that nothing serious would happen to the confederate, especially considering the immense prestige of the location. Also when the experiment was replicated in a run-down office, obedience decreased to a mere 20.5%. This suggests that the original study did not investigate what it aimed to investigate.

- Lack of ecological validity – The tasks given to participants are not like those we would encounter in real life e.g. shooting somebody in the face is different from flicking a switch, meaning that the methodology lacks mundane realism, producing results which are low in ecological validity.

Part 6: Dispositional Explanations for Obedience: The Authoritarian Personality

Dispositional explanation = internal explanation i.e personality factors/individual reasons why someone obeys.

Psychologists, and specifically Adorno,found that one particular characteristic that people may have is the authoritarian personality. It is said that people with this trait are more likely to obey, and such traits can be measured using the F-scale. This requires participants to rate the extent of their own agreement to certain statements using a Likert-style scale e.g."Respect for authority and parents are some of the most important values which a child can learn".

The authoritarian personality is when you believe that people should completely obey or submit to their authority figures, and suppress their own beliefs. This means that they believe they should strictly submit to those higher in authority but those who are perceived as lower than the individual should also submit to the individual. This term was coined by Theodore Adorno. Such individuals have a 'fixed' cognitive style, where they do not challenge stereotypes due to their tendency to adopt absolutist/'black and white' thinking. This accordance with stereotypes prevents any grey areas emerging from uncertainty.

Adorno believed in the psychodynamic theory i.e. that a person's personality traits and attitudes as an adult stemmed from childhood influences such as that of one's parents. He found that when a child had overly harsh and disciplinarian parents, the child would displace their anger with their parents onto seemingly 'inferior' others, through the process of scapegoating. On a surface level, they would idolise their parents, but on an unconscious level, they would fear and despise them, and so arises the need to displace such anger. The child would be more likely to target their displaced anger on those who seem weak and unable to defend themselves, such as minority groups. This is known as reaction formation and is often seen in current politics.

— There are serious methodological issues associated with the F-scale, as suggested by Greenstein. This scale is particularly susceptible to acquiscence bias, which describes the phenomenon of respondents always responding in the same way using the scales provided, regardless of the content shown in the scales. Therefore, this suggests that the findings produced by the F-scale may be lacking in validity and reliability.

— The Authoritarian Personality may not be able to explain all cases of obedience across the whole political spectrum, according to Christie and Jahoda. This is because the F-scale technically measures the likeness between an individual to Fascism (far-right on the political scale), but left-wing authoritarianism is also present, such as Bolshevism, and has been ignored by the current theory. Since there are more similarities between the two ends of these spectrums than differences, most notably a large emphasis on utmost respect for legitimate authority, this suggests that Fascist-like views can be found across the whole spectrum, which the Authoritarian Personality does not account for.

— The Authoritarian Personality has little ecological validity because it cannot explain many real-life examples of mass obedience. For example, it is very unlikely that the whole German population during Nazi occupation had an Authoritarian Personality, but rather many shared the same struggles in life and displaced their fear about the future onto a perceived 'inferior' group of people, through the process of scapegoating. This means that such a theory is a limited explanation for some examples of obedience.

Part 7: Explanations of Resistance to Social Influence, including Social Support and Locus of Control:

Some people are more resistant to social influence. This can be explained by the person's *locus of control*, or whether or not they receive *social support.*

Locus of control (Rotter 1966)

The locus of control is a measurement of an individual's sense of control over their lives, i.e to what extent they feel that events in their lives are under their own personal control, versus under the control of other external powers like fate.

Internal (more control)	External (less control)
Behaviour is caused by their own personal decisions and effort	Behaviour is caused by luck or fate

People with more of an internal locus of control conform and obey less - this because they take more responsibility for their own actions and see themselves as having more control than someone with a high external locus of control, and so are more likely to make decisions based on their own moral code, as opposed to someone else's. Therefore, people with a high internal locus of control are more likely to be leaders, not followers. The opposite goes for those with an external locus of control - since they believe that the majority of their life events are beyond their control, this means that they are more likely to act on behalf of another (i.e. as their agent) and shift responsibility onto this individual. Those with an external locus of control are particularly susceptible towards obedience.

An example of a high internal locus of control thought: 'I won the award because I worked hard for it.
An example of a low external locus of control thought: 'I won the award because it was meant to be – it was my destiny'

+There is research evidence supporting the link between locus of control and obedience. For example, **Atgis (1998)** conducted a meta-analysis of studies considering locus of control and likeliness to conform. It was found that those who scored highest on the eternal locus of control were more easily persuaded and more likely to conform. Therefore, having an external locus of control leads to a greater rate of conformity.

+ There is also research evidence supporting the link between locus of control and social responsibility. For example, **Oliner and Oliner (1988)** interviewed two groups of non-Jewish people who had lived through the holocaust. They also interviewed 406 people who protected and rescued Jews from Nazis and 126 people who did not. The rescuers were found to have an internal locus of control and also scored higher on measures of social responsibility. However, this also draws doubt over the direct link between locus of control and resistance to obedience - perhaps measures of social responsibility are more important/influential?

— The locus of control explanation is only valid for novel situations, as suggested by Rutter. Previous experiences are always more influential than LOC when an individual is making a decision as to how to act. This means that LOC is a limited explanation for only some cases of obedience.

Social support

Asch found that when one of the confederates did not conform, and gave the actual correct answer, conformity levels in the participant dropped to one quarter of what they were when the majority had been unanimous. It has been said that this is not just due to the lack of unanimity of the majority, but the fact that the answer supports the participants true answer, it provides the participant with social support through also providing an alternative source of information. It gave them more confidence in their own perception by providing a small amount of confirmation of their answer, which is often enough to encourage the person to reject the majority position. Therefore, resistance to obedience in this case would be due to social support, as facilitated by normative social influence and informative social influence!

+This idea is also supported by a variation of Milgram's study, where there were two other participants (who were actually confederates) and disobeyed the experimenter. The presence of the other person caused the level of obedience to reduce to 10%. This shows that the social support provided from the other participants gave them the confidence to reject the position of authority.

+ Gamson et al also gave support to the idea that larger groups provide a stronger social support system, which makes resisting obedience/social influence much easier. These researchers found that when participants where placed in groups, 88% resisted the pressure to conform to the same smear campaign which other confederates had developed. This also clearly demonstrates the significant influence of social support systems.

Part 8: Minority Influence including reference to Consistency, Commitment and Flexibility

An example of a study into minority influence is by Moscovici.

Moscovici's study

Participants	Randomly selected participants and confederates
Aim	To observe how minorities can influence a majority
Procedure	• It was a lab experiment • Participants were in a group where there were two confederates (the minority) and four participants (the majority). • Everyone was shown 36 blue slides, each with a different shade of blue. • They were each asked to say whether the slide was blue or green. • Confederates deliberately said they were green on two-thirds of the trials, thus producing a consistent minority view. • The number of times that the real participants reported that the slide was green was observed. • A control group was also used consisting of participants only – no confederates..
Findings	When the confederates were consistent in their answers about 8% of participants said the slides were green. However, when the confederates answered inconsistently about 1% of participants said the slides were green. This shows that consistency is crucial for a minority to exert maximum influence on a majority.

Consistency

Moscovici's study clearly demonstrates the role of consistency in minority influence. The majority is more likely to be influenced by the minority when the minority is consistent in their

views. This is because it makes the opposition think that the views of the minority are real and serious enough to pay attention to (i.e. the augmentation principle), if they are so determined to stay consistent. If all members share the same views (synchronic), then it can convince the majority that there is something worth agreeing with. Remaining consistent over time (diachronic synchrony) forces the opposition to rethink their own views repeatedly over time and generates more doubt due to the conflicting views, which allows more opportunity to be influenced.
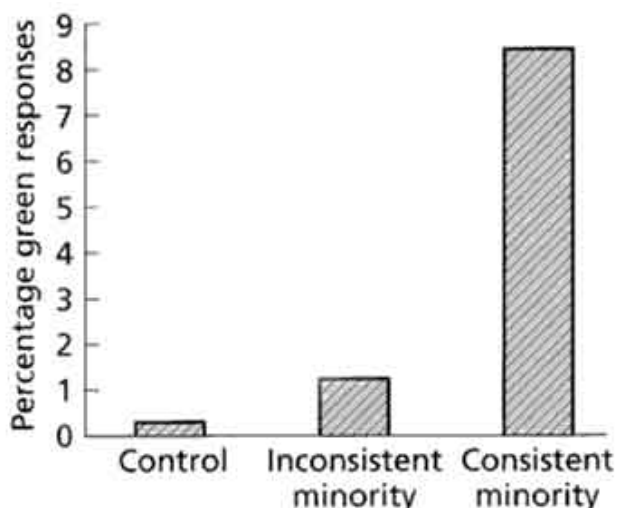
There are two types of consistency:
- Diachronic consistency is when the group remains consistent over time – they do not change their views over time.
- Synchronic consistency is when the group is consistent between all the members of the group – everyone in the group has the same views, and therefore agree with and support each other.

Commitment
The majority is more likely to be influenced by the minority when the minority is committed, because when the minority have so much passion and confidence in their point of view, it suggests to the majority that their view must somehow be valid, and it encourages them to explore why; offering more opportunity to be influenced.

Flexibility
The majority is more likely to be influenced by the minority when the minority is flexible. Being too consistent can suggest that the minority is inflexible, uncompromising and irrational, making their argument less appealing to the majority. However, if they appear flexible, compromising and rational, they are less likely to be seen as extremists and attention seekers. They are more likely to be seen as reasonable, considerate and cooperative.

+ Martin et al (2003) found that people were less willing to change their opinion if they had listened to a minority group rather than if they were shared with a majority group. This suggests minority message had been deeply processed and had an enduring effect. In his study, one group heard the opinion of a minority group whilst the second group heard the opinion of a majority group. After both groups were exposed to an opposing opinion, the group who'd heard the minority view were significantly less likely to change their own views. This suggests that a minority is more powerful because it holds risk (the augmentation principle) and so forces the audience to reconsider their own views.

+ The emphasis of consistency, commitment and flexibility have a real-life application because they can inform minority groups about the best way to behave in order to exert a maximum amount of influence. However, it is worth considering that the majority is not only larger than the minority, but often has greater connections and more power. Therefore, the three techniques described above are not always enough to change the opinion of an audience.

— A key issue with Moscovici's study in particular is the reliance on artificial tasks and stimuli. This means that such methodology lacks mundane realism because the tasks do not reflect the scenarios within which minority groups would act in real life. This also means that the findings are likely to lack ecological validity because the extent to which the results can be generalised is limited.

Part 9: The role of Social Influence Processes in Social Change

Examples of social influence processes are strategies that can cause social change, which is when there is a shift in the beliefs or behaviour of an entire population (and not simple isolated groups of people), and the previously widely accepted norm changes to be something new. These strategies include utilising minority influence, encouraging an internal locus of control and disobedience to authority.

Minority influence is the main cause of social change. The minority group manages to persuade the majority to adopt their point of view by being consistent, committed and flexible. However, the minority must have an internal locus of control to resist compliance, while also being able to disobey authority to drive their point into the limelight. The importance of consistency, flexibility (Nemeth) and commitment were demonstrated by Moscovici.

When the minority begins to be successful in their attempts to influence the majority, it triggers a snowball effect as the new idea spreads and builds up over time in the majority, to eventually be adopted as the majority opinion (where the rate of conversion is higher than the number of the previous majority view). Those who are refuse to be influenced by the new idea will eventually be forced to comply by the majority. The new majority opinion also tends to become the law, so people are forced to obey it.

An example of this could be the shift in attitudes towards race and sexuality. Being racist and homophobic used to be the norm, but after influences from minority groups, it eventually became accepted as the new norm and those who continue to be racist and homophobic are pressured to hide it or change. Hateful acts towards the minorities used to be accepted but is now illegal.

— Social change, as argued by Nemeth (1986) is a slow process and produced fragile effects. He argues that the majority are not exposed to the main issue at hand (which, if addressed, would cause a change in norms which would appear to be too drastic) and so this main issue is not resolved. The process takes a long time, meaning that the effects (i.e. social change) are also delayed. Therefore, this suggests that social change through minority influence cannot be relied upon to bring about long-standing changes in society.

— Social change is not always as simple as portrayed above, with many being quite settled in their views and unwilling to change. Bashir suggests that these social barriers are largely due to the stereotypes which many have. For example, despite the obvious perks to recycling, many are still unwilling to admit that they recycle in fear of being labelled 'weird' or

a 'tree-hugger'. This suggests that minority influence and social influence are not always completely effective because they cannot tackle these kinds of issues.

— Mackie suggests that the role of minority influence is very limited because we are more likely to change our own views if the majority view is different to our own. This is because we often take comfort knowing that so many other people also share our view that when they don't, we become unsettled and are forced to deeply process this change!