



# SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY

A summary



# OBEDIENCE

A form of social influence, where behaviour is impacted by a real or imagined pressure from another

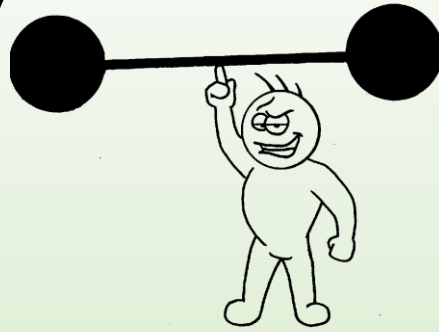
Yielding to the demands of an authority figure is **obedience**, rejecting the demands is **dissent**.

- From experience of Nazi Germany
- Society is **hierarchical**, evolved to fulfil some social function, as it seems to stabilise and create order. Obedience is necessary for this to work
- We are **innately** prepared to be obedient and this is nurtured through **socialisation**
- Humans exist in **autonomy** (choosing own behaviour) or as **agents** (guided by authority)
- When ordered to act immorally or unfairly we face **moral strain** which is relieved when we become agents, shifting the responsibility to higher authority.

## Agency Theory (Milgram)

Sometimes dissent offers the same relief from moral strain

# Agency Theory evaluation



- Experiments by Milgram showed 65% of pps willing to obey. They showed overt signs of moral strain when given an order and **displaced responsibility** onto the experimenter when debriefed
- Verbal reports from Vietnam War (e.g. My Lai village shooting) suggested soldiers 'just followed orders'
- Hofling et al (1966) in hospital nurses obeyed doctor's overdose order

21 out of  
22

- Doesn't explain individual differences (e.g. personality, gender etc.)
- Concepts like agency are difficult to define and measure as they are internal, mental processes
- No evidence of evolutionary basis of obedience (but primate hierarchy can be seen)
- Doesn't explain motivational issues. French and Raven (1959) propose **5 bases of power**



Legitimate, reward,  
referent, expert &  
coercive

# Social Impact Theory

- Proposed by Latane (1981) who talked about **targets** (being influenced ) and **sources** (influencers)
- Developed a formulation of different principles that result in more or less influence being exerted

We're greatly influenced by the actions of others

**SOCIAL FORCES -**  
Impact of source is function of **strength** (e.g. age, authority) **immediacy** (e.g. proximity, presence of buffers) & **number of sources**

## PSYCHOSOCIAL LAW-

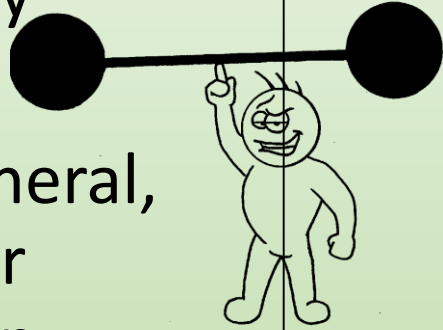
Effect becomes less pronounced with intensity. Berkowitz et al (1969) more passerbys looked up with more confederates but effect plateaued



**DIVISION OF IMPACT –** effect can be multiplied by source but also **divided by target numbers**. Authority figure has less influence if target has allies. (Milgram, obedience lowered to 10% if peer rebels are added to experiment)

# Social Impact Theory evaluation

- The theory is quantifiable, as principles can be easily observed
- It provides a good, general, descriptive formula for predicting behaviour in certain circumstances
- Principles are supported by Asch's conformity research and Milgram's obedience work



& Latane's  
bystander  
behaviour  
research

- It oversimplifies individuals as passive receivers, disregarding the active and mutual nature of social interaction
- Ignores individual differences (e.g. some are more resistant to influence, some are more passive)
- Static, rather than dynamic theory, taking no account of the interaction between target and source
- Limited in the type of social situation it can explain (e.g. can't predict impact of equal groups targeting each other)



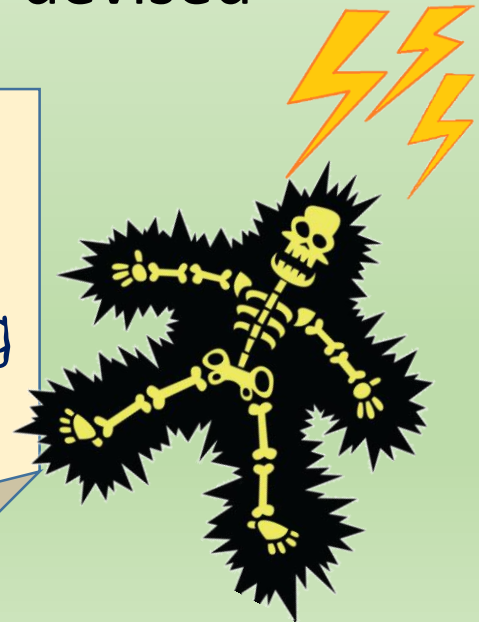
Like at a  
football  
match



# Milgram's Experiments (1960s)

- Advert & \$4 incentive– 160, male pps (range of occupations, ages etc)
- Interaction Lab at Yale University with 'experimenter' and 'victim'
- Pretext briefing about using shocks to aid learning then lots drawn
- Pps given task of teaching list of words, shock if wrong (15-450v)
- Verbal prods were not needed in pilot study so variations were devised including:
  - remote feedback (65% went to end)
  - verbal feedback (62.5 went to end)
  - proximity (40% went to end)
  - touch-proximity (30% went to end)

All showed signs of protest, nervous twitching and anxiety



# Variations and Methodological Evaluations

(7) Telephonic instructions – 22.5% obeyed, some lied to experimenter

(10) Rundown office block – Bridgeport, Connecticut, 48% obeyed

(13) Ordinary man- 20% obeyed, learner had to persuade continuation



- Highly standardised and controlled, same briefing, prods etc.
- Qualitative and quantitative measures were taken (e.g. time to press, signs of anxiety) so highly scientific
- Replications show similar results (e.g. Burger, 2002, and Slater et al 2006)



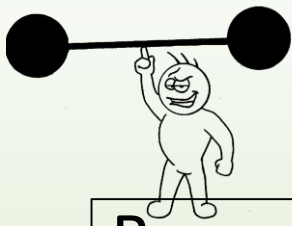
Used virtual characters

- Mainly male, self-selecting sample is not representative
- Pps didn't believe premise
- Lab research lacks 'mundane realism'

BUT anxiety observed and range of pp reasons

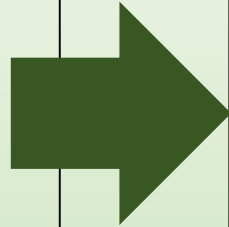
BUT Hofling et al showed in hospital





# Ethical Evaluations

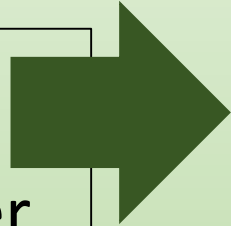
Baumrind (1964) was concerned about pps' welfare as stress was deliberately caused.



Milgram discussed with colleagues and pp responses were not expected and anxiety was 'momentary excitement'

BUT he did the experiment 18 times with 636 pps

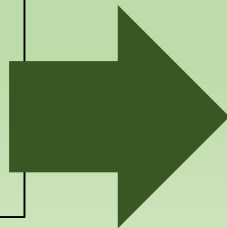
Deception is problematic, especially after embarrassment of debrief



'necessary evil' and debrief encouraged pps that they were normal and supported (reconciliation with victim, follow up report etc)

84% were glad they took part

Pps were incentivised and right to withdraw violated by verbal prods



Prods were essential to experiment and 35% did withdraw





# **Situational Factors Affecting Obedience**

- **MOMENTUM OF COMPLIANCE** – if request starts small then builds a binding relationship is created and obedience escalates
- **PROXIMITY** - closer authority figure, higher obedience but closer victim provides buffer to obedience
- **STATUS OF AUTHORITY** – only obedient to legitimate authority
- **PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY** – obedience only seen if responsibility can be transferred to the authority.

# Individual Differences in Obedience

## PERSONALITY:

- Locus of control – dissenting pps take more responsibility onto themselves (internal locus of control), obedient people displace the blame (external locus of control). Rotter (1966)
- Authoritarian personality – more likely to submit to authority
- Empathy – high empathy, less likely to harm

BUT little evidence to support

Burger's results don't agree

## GENDER:

- Traditionally women are expected to be more compliant.
- Milgram found women as compliant as men but higher anxiety doing it
- Blass (1999) 9/10 studies showed consistent obedience

## CULTURE:

- In individualistic and collectivistic cultures obedience varies
- Collectivistic cultures more likely to obey for stability
- Blass (1999) reviewed e.g. Australia (28%), South Africa (87.5), UK (50%)

Range of methodologies

# PREJUDICE

An extreme, unfavourable attitude associated with:

- Cognition (stereotypes)
- Affection (feelings of hostility and hatred)
- Behaviour (e.g. avoidance, jokes, discrimination)

- Proposed by Sherif (1966) who said prejudice arises from conflict between groups
- Conducted boys' summer camps experiments, creating **intergroup conflict by introducing competition.**
- Intergroup conflict results in **in-group favouritism** and **out-group hostility**
- Can be reduced by groups co-operating to achieve **superordinate goals**
- Supported by Ember & Ember (1992) observing tribes with changing resources

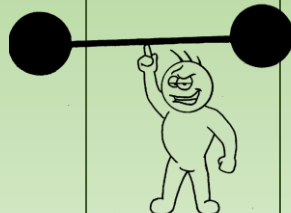


## Realistic Conflict Theory

e.g. Hutus & Tutsis, immigrants and indigenous people



Research is 'real-life' giving ecologically valid support



Aronson et al (1978) tested by introducing co-operation in competitive classrooms. Prejudice decreased and liking increased

Sherif's research shows evidence that boys were hostile even before the competition

# Social Identity Theory



e.g. football support

Collectivistic cultures less likely to show out-group prejudice e.g Weatherall (1992) in Polynesia

Demand characteristics may have occurred in this lab based research



Cialdini et al (1976) showed personal identity is linked to social identity in a non-minimal group paradigm study



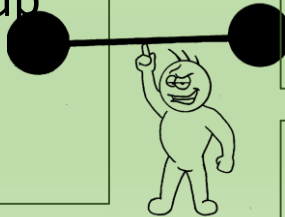
Lemyre & Smith (1985) replicated and supported finding that discrimination improved self-esteem

Aronson & Osherow (1980) showed (classroom based) social categorisation can lead to prejudice



- Proposed by Tajfel & Turner (1979) who used Sherif's ideas as a foundation, suggesting that the mere presence of another group causes prejudice
- Groups are either **in-group** or **out-group**
- **Personal identity** is self-image and self-esteem and **social identity** is membership of groups. The two are bound together and need to be positive.
- We raise the positive attributes of the in-group through **in-group favouritism** and **out-group bias**
- Members in our group are seen as unique (**heterogeneous**), while members of an out-group are seen as 'all the same' (**homogenous**)

Minimal Group Paradigm experiments offer support



# Factors Affecting Prejudice

- PERSONALITY – older theories used to focus on prejudice as dispositional and part of personality e.g. Adorno et al's Authoritarian Personality theory (1950) suggested that specific characteristics will make someone hostile to others. Questionnaires measured **anti-Semitism, ethnocentrism, conservatism and fascism** .
- CULTURE – influences if it has social norms that legitimise prejudice. These are constantly changing so it is hard to compare cultures. Katz & Braly (1993) used questionnaires to investigate and identify American stereotypes. When it was replicated by Karlins et al (1953) they found some had changed, some had not.
- Individualistic and collectivistic cultural distinctions encourage different levels of interpersonal prejudice e.g. Al-Zahrani & Kaplowitz (1993) found (collectivist) Saudis self-report more in group favouritism and out-group bias



BUT comparisons across cultures are difficult to measure



# Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation: The Robber's Cave Experiment (Sherif et al 1954, 1961)

- Third experiment was most successful in reducing prejudice:
  - created in-groups with cooperative tasks
  - created competition between groups for goals
  - introduced **superordinate goals** (required working together e.g. fixing a water tank)
- Boys' summer camp ('Robber's Cave) with 22 11 year olds from middle-class Protestant backgrounds who were opportunity sampled
- Researchers observed verbal and non verbal communication as in-group relationships emerged and gathered sociometric data (e.g. popularity etc)
- Stereotypes, behaviours and attitudes measured during camp tournament
- Conflict resolution techniques applied in final stage

# Results

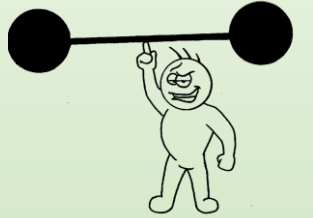
- When they competed the boys became territorial and hostile to the other group. There was strong in-group favouritism and out-group bias
- Mere contact was not enough to create hostility so the research supported realistic conflict theory
- Reducing conflict through superordinate goals lead to less out-group bias
- In stage 2 93% of boys selected friendships exclusively from their in-group but by stage 3 more chose friends from the out-group

# Evaluation

- High ecological validity (natural camp behaviour)
- High control and planning (e.g. covert observation by camp leaders)
- Matched groups of boys

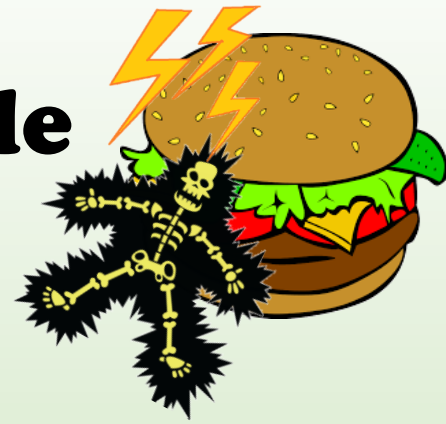
BUT

- boys were aware of some recording and some leaders encouraged hostility
- Gender bias by only using boys so ungeneralizable
- Boys showed some hostility to other group before the competition began
- Ethical issues because the parents gave consent but not the boys and the aim was to deliberately create prejudice which is unethical



TYERMAN & SPENCER (1983) did a similar study with boys that already knew each other (scouts). When they introduced competition the groups showed no conflict or hostility

# REPLICATING MILGRAM: Would people still obey today? (Burger 2009)



- Expected same results as Milgram but addressed ethical issues
- Adverts then screening to take out those familiar with the study, those with psychological issues (included interviews with clinical psychologists and questionnaires)
- 29 men, 41 women pps with mean age of 42.9 years
- Experiment 1: replication of Milgram, recording of learner's protests, after 150V (and prodding if needed) experiment ended and immediately the experimenter revealed the truth and safety of the learner
- Experiment 2 (modelled refusal): same procedure but 2 confederates (other one is second teacher). Confederate stops experiment and pp is asked to continue with the shocking.

# Results:

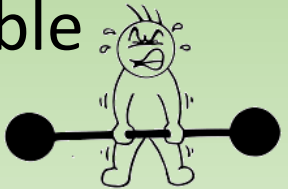
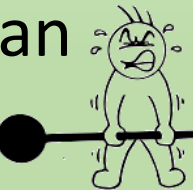
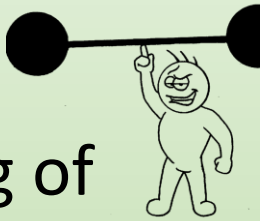
Experiment 1: 70% would have continued shocking over 150v

Experiment 2: 63.3% would have continued shocking (similar to baseline)

Little gender difference and no difference between personality scores

## Evaluation

- Acknowledged ethical concerns of Milgram's and ensured well-being of pps (e.g. screening, informed 3 times of rights, reduced shock, immediate debrief)
- Pps still placed in position of possible harm, anxiety etc.
- Stopping at 150V reduces ethical issue but means the experimenters can only assume the pps would continue
- More diverse sample than Milgram so findings are more generalisable but still lab-based, not real world so lacks 'mundane realism'





# How can social psychology be used to explain heroism?



how to resist social forces

challenge conformity

Zimbardo wanted to turn the negatives of social psychology into positives so founded the HEROIC IMAGINATION PROJECT which says heroism has 4 elements:

- It's voluntary
- It's done to help people in need
- It involves some form of risk
- It's done without need for compensation

## Aims:

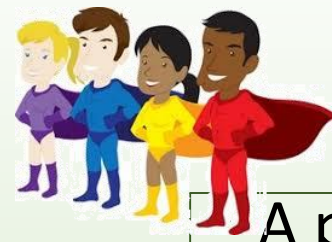
refocus on positive action

Heroism is not a personality but a situational decision

## Universal Social Tendencies:

1. React automatically when not paying attention
2. Rely on labels and categories for quick judgments
3. Rely on others to interpret situation
4. Seek acceptance and avoid rejection
5. Believe we cannot change

# How does it link to research and theories?



**OBEDIENCE:** uses Milgram's research to describe our 'natural tendency' to blindly follow orders and other real-life obedience research

**PREJUDICE:** draws on Tajfel's minimum group paradigm to naturally create in-group and out-group labels that can lead to inaccurate, unfair judgments and favouritism

**BYSTANDER BEHAVIOUR:** explains our avoidance of personal responsibility and diffusion of responsibility (e.g. Latane (1964) researched murder of woman whose screams were heard but no one helped)

**HEROISM:** understanding how social influences can be used to encourage positive behaviour, teaching people to be mindful of others and respond thoughtfully and with responsibility

# Does it work?

A positive force in society

- Impact on behaviour and attitude in schools is being researched
- Little research done or empirical evidence of success
- People may place themselves in harm's way to be 'heroic'
- Some research suggests influence of social forces but other research points to innate characteristics which the project won't change
- Walker et al (2010) found that one-off heroes show no different personality traits to ordinary people, though long-term heroes did have some different characteristics

