**SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY**

## The influence of groups on behaviour

# What is a group?

* **Two or more people who interact and influence each other for more than a few moments (bidirectional)**
* A collection of individuals who relate to one another in such wat that there is interdepended between them
* Therefore, social psychology involves the study of how human thoughts, feelings and behaviours influence by the group
* Group influence can be positive or negative

# GROUP POLARISATION

**GROUP POLARISATION:** when individuals are in groups with others who hold similar attitudes or beliefs, **discussion** within the group tends to strengthen opinions

**KEY STUDY – MYERS AND BISHOP (1970)**

* **Procedure:** selected groups of highly racially prejudiced students and groups of less racially prejudiced students to discuss a number of racial issues
* **Results:**
  + Demonstrated that racial prejudice decreased for already low-prejudice individuals and increased for already high prejudiced individuals after individuals engaged in their respective group discussion
  + When students who were low in racial prejudice talked more together about racial issues, their attitudes became even more accepting – the opposite was also true
  + Their study supported the claim that discussion among like-minded individuals tends to increase and intensify pre-existing attitudes, thereby demonstrating group polarisation

**Group polarisation and the terrorist mentality:**

* Group polarisation helps to explain processors that can lead to actions of suicide bombers and young people joining ISIS
* Terrorists are members of groups whose beliefs become stronger and more firmly entrenched as a result of discussion with like-minded people
* Clark McCauley (2002, in Myers 2007), noted that the terrorist mentality does not come out of thin air, it arises when people with a shared grievance get together and talk in a group where there are no moderating influences

# CONFORMITY AND OBEDIENCE

**CONFORMITY:** changing of behaviour and attitude in response to group pressure

* Frist studied by Solomon Asch (1955)
* Why do people conform? – why do people adjust their behaviour or thinking towards some group standard?
  + Few people like standing out and looking different from those around them
  + Society requires some sort of conformity to establish rules and norms
  + Behaviour would be otherwise unpredictable
  + Means people will assume the behaviour of others, in any particular social group
* The reasons people conform are explained by two types of conformity: normative social influence and informational social influence

**Normative social influence:** when a person conforms to group standards in order to be accepted by the group

* Usually involves compliance – where a person publicly accepts the views of the group but privately rejects them

Examples

* Could be dress norms, language norms, behavioural norms
* Friendship groups exert strong influence on way people dress, speak, and behave
* Breaking norms can lead to disapproval or even exclusion from a group

**Informative social influence:** when people are in strange situations with people they do not know well, or in situations that are new to them, people take cues on how to act from watching those around them

* A person lacks knowledge and looks to the group for guidance
* It can occur when a person is in an ambiguous situation
* compare their behaviour with the group
* usually involves internalisation – where a person accepts the views of the group and adopts them as an individual

Examples

* at religious institutions for a wedding, funeral

**KEY EXPERIMENT - ASCH (1951)**

* **Outline** 
  + There was an obvious answer to a line judgement task
  + If the participant gave an incorrect answer it would be clear it was due to group pressure
* **Aim:** to investigate the extent to which social pressure from majority group could affect a person to conform
* **Sample:** 50 male students from Swarthmore College in the USA
* **Procedure:** 
  + Participants participated in a ‘vison test’
  + Using a ling judgement task, participant in a room with seven confederates
  + Confederates had agreed in advance what their responses would be when presented with the line task
  + Real participant didn’t know this and was led to believe that the other seven participants were also real participants like themselves
  + Each person in room had to state out loud which comparison lines length (a, b or c) was the most like the target line
  + Answer was always obvious
  + Real participant sat at end of row and gave their answer last
  + 18 trials in total, confederates gave wrong answer on 12 trials (called critical trials)
  + Also had control condition where there were no confederates, only a real participant
* **Results:**
  + Measured the number of times each participant conformed to the majority view
  + On average, on-third (32%) of participants went along and conformed with the clearly incorrect majority on the on the critical trials
  + Over the 12 critical trials
    - About 75% of participants conformed on at least one trial
    - 50% of participants conformed on at least 6 of the trials
    - 25% never conformed
* **Conclusions**
  + Presence of normative social influence: when interviews after the experiment, most participants said that they did not really believe their conforming answers, but had gone along with the group for fear of being ridiculed or though ‘peculiar’
  + Presence of informational social influence: some participants said in their interview that they really did believe the groups answers were correct (internalisation)
* People conform for two main reasons:
  + Because they want to fit in with the group (normative influence)
  + Because they believe the group is better informed then they are (informational social influence)

**Factors that influence conformity**

* Group size
  + Group size influenced whether subjects conformed
  + Bigger majority (number of confederates) = more people conform, only up to a certain point
  + Optimum conformity effects (32%) were found with a majority of 3
  + According to Hogg & Vaughan (199%) the most robust finding is that conformity reaches its full extent with 3-5person majority 🡪 additional members have little effect
* Degree of group unanimity / presence of an ally
  + Asch (1956) found that even the presence of just one confederate that goes against the majority choice can reduce conformity as much as 80%
  + In original experiment, 32% of participants conformed on the critical trials, whereas when one confederate gave the correct answer on all the critical trials this conformity dropped to 5%
  + When others in the group are unanimous – agree completely – it is difficult to stand out

**OBDEINCE:** changing of behaviour in response to **instruction** or direct request by an authority figure

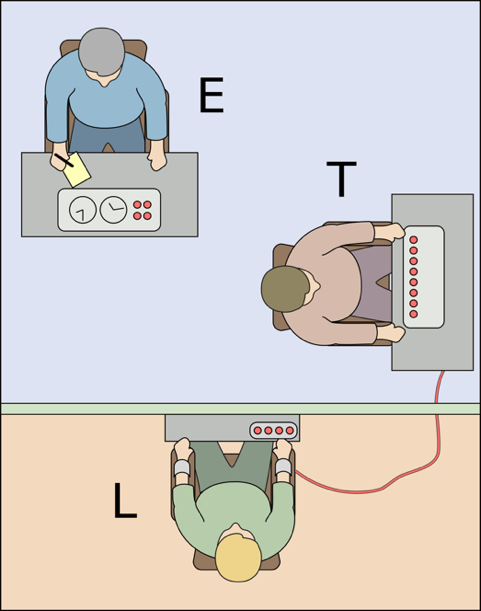
* It is assumed that without such instruction or request the person would not have acted this way

**KEY EXPERIMENT – STANLEY MILGRAM (1963)**

**Shock Experiment**

* Milgram set out to study the question ‘Are Germans different? Is there something distinctive about German culture that had allowed the holocaust to take place?
* How can the blind obedience of Nazi SS officers to their superiors’ instructions to execute millions of Jews during the Holocaust, and the general compliance of the greater German population, be explained?

**Sample**

* Those involved: scientist- confederate (authority figure), teacher- participant and learner- confederate
* Recruited subjects for his experiments from various walks in life
* Respondents were told the experiment would study the effects of punishment on learning ability
* Offered cash token award for participating
* Although respondents thought they had an equal choice of playing the role of a student or of a teach, the process was rigged so all respondents played the teacher
* Learner was actor working

**Results**

* 65% of participants administered the maximum possible voltage possible (450V)
* **All participants administered at least 300 volts** 
  + At this point five participants refused to continue any further
  + This could be because at 300V the ‘learner’ had been instructed to fall silent and no longer respond to the shock

Divided participants into three categories:

* Participants who obeyed but justified themselves
  + Gave responsibility for their actions, blaming the experimenter
  + If anything happened to the learner, they would reason it is the experimenter’s fault
  + Some transferred blame to learner
* Participants who obeyed but blamed themselves
  + Felt badly about what they had done, harsh on themselves
  + These people would be more likely to challenge authority if confronted with similar situation in the future
* Participants who rebelled
  + Questioned the authority of the experimenter and argued there was greater ethical imperative calling for the protection of the learner over the needs of the experimenter
  + Felt they were accountable to a higher authority

**Results**

* Milgram was surprised at the extent to which participants followed experiments instructions in this and subsequent studies
* The main factors influencing obedience include:
  + Immediacy or proximity to victim who was not seen: in subsequent studies when the teacher could see the learner, obedience dropped
  + Immediacy or proximity of the experimenter: removing the experimenter from the same room also reduced obedience
  + Authority of the experimenter: in mailgrams study the experimenter was a white lab coated Caucasian university professor, confuting experiment in a non-university setting also reduced obedience

**Conclusions as to why people obeyed the scientist**

* Belief in scientist’s legitimate authority
* Commitment to successful achievement of the experiment
* Lack of disobedient role models: conducting the experiment in social isolation meant that social norms or expected behaviours were not present
* Lack of personal responsibility: in effect, teachers were acting on orders removing any personal responsibility for their actions

**Variations**

* Closer proximity of the teacher to the learner:
  + Teachers were asked to force learners hand to the shock plate to deliver punishment
  + Less obedience was extracted from subjects in this case
* Teacher free to choose level of shock delivered:
  + Teachers instructed to apply whatever voltage they desired
  + Teachers averaged 83 volts, only 2.5% used full 450 volts
  + Shows most participants were good, average people, and not evil individuals
  + Participants obeyed only under coercion

**KEY EXPERIMENT – PHILLIP ZIMBARDO (1973)**

**Stanford prison experiment**

**Sample**

* Advertised for volunteers to participate in study of the psychological effects of prison life
* 75 applicants given diagnostic interviews and personality tests 🡪 to eliminate candidates with any psychological problems
* 24 men judged to be the most physically and mentally stable, the most mature and least involved in antisocial behaviours
* Participants did not know each other prior to study
* Paid $15 a day to take part
* Randomly assigned the role of prisoner or prison guard

**Setting**

* 6x9 foot prison cells
* Each cell had three prisoners
* The other rooms across from cells were utilised for jail guards
* One tiny space designated as solitary confinement room ‘the hole’

**Procedure**

* Prisoners to remain in the mock prison 24 hours a day
* Guards assigned three-man teams for 8 hr shifts
* Hidden cameras and microphones allowed researchers to observe
* Guards instructed to do whatever they thought was necessary to maintain law
* No physical violence was permitted
* Zimbardo acted as a researcher as well as a prison warden

**Results**

* Was meant to run for two weeks, but was terminated on the sixth day due to emotional breakdowns of prisoners, and excessive aggression of the guards
* Christina Maslach questioned its morality and strongly objected towards the research

**Conclusions**

* Realised that social roles influence behaviour in more complex ways
* Behaviours of the prison guards and prisoners was not a function of the prisoners being criminals but the social environment of the prison and the roles of the participants influenced the way both guards and prisoners behaved
* the experiment revealed how people will readily conform to the social roles they are expected to play
* Because guards placed in a position if authority 🡪 behaved/acted in ways they would not usually in their normal lives
* Prison-like environment was an important factor in creating the guards brutal behaviour 🡪 none of the participants that acted as guards showed sadistic tendencies before the study
* Findings support the situational explanation of behaviour rather than the dispositional one

Presence of conformity and obedience

* Conformity
  + Normative social influence: some of the guards wanted to fit in and be accepted by the more forceful guards, so conformed to the norm of treating the prisoners poorly even though they did not believe it was right
  + Informational social influence: some of the guards were unsure how to behave as guards, so took social cues from other guards on appropriate behaviours
* Obedience: even though they were participants and not real prisoners, the power of the situation they were in, made the prisoners obey the directions of the prison guards

# IMPACTS OF THE PRESENCE OF OTHERS ON INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOUR

**SOCIAL FACILITATION: The improvement in performance due to the presence of others**

* Norman Triplett (1898) noticed that cyclists rode faster when competing against each other then when they raced against the clock
* He hypothesized that the presence of others boosts performance
* “bodily presence of another contestant participating simultaneously in the races serves to liberate **latent energy** not ordinarily available”
  + Free up excess energy that is not ordinarily available
* the presence can be real, imagined (in the persons head) or implied (something in room that implies your being watched)
* tested this theory by asking adolescence to wind in a fishing reel as quickly as they could, and found their performance was better when they were with another person rather than on their own

**Two types of social facilitation:**

* **Co-action effects:** increased task performance comes about by the mere presence of other doing the same tasks
  + e.g. someone running in 100m sprint
* **Audience effects:** type of social facilitation in which an individual’s performance is influenced by the presence of others in the form of an audience 🡪 causes individuals dominant response to occur

**KEY STUDY – NORMAN TRIPLETT (1898) (**not that important)

**Aim**

**and procedure**

* aim: attempted to duplicate his findings regarding cyclists under laboratory conditions using children and fishing reels
* procedure: he sued apparatus consisting of two fishing reels clamped to a table top and arranged in a Y shape to support two people turning side by side
* the dual apparatus enabled Triplett to test individuals working along and reeling side by side with another person
* children put into groups or alone, asked them to perform simple tasks such as reel in a fishing rod
  + IV: child’s situation: by themselves OR in pair but working alone
  + DV: time taken to wind in line (seconds)
* Task: to wind in a given amount of fishing line
* Stylus traced a curve on a kymograph – the greater the speed of the reeling, the short and straighter the resulting line
* This allowed for him to test the speed of the children and count the number times the roll turned

**Results**

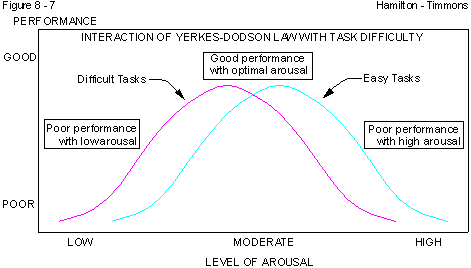
* Triplett found that there was a rise in performance in simple tasks from the children in groups than when they were alone
* As he compared the times of the trials where child took in the line alone, compared with the children doing it with competition, majority performed better in pairs

**SOCIAL INHIBITATION: the reduction in performance due to the presence of others**

* Triplett’s findings has found the presence of others did not always boost performance
* With some complex tasks 🡪 presence of others led to worse performance

**KEY STUDY – YAKES AND DODSON’S (1908)**

**Law of arousal, complexity and performance**

* the different effects of the presence of others can be understood when it is considered that being watched increases a person’s level of arousal
* Yakes and Dodson discovered people generally perform best at moderate levels of arousal: performance drops when they are not sufficiently aroused or over-aroused
* Optimum(moderate) level of arousal for best performance varies, depending on the type of task the person is undertaking:
  + With simple or well-learned tasks: people perform better with relatively higher levels of arousal
  + For difficult or new tasks: people perform better with relatively lower levels of arousal
* ****The Yakes-Dodson Law suggests that there is a relationship between performance and arousal
* increased arousal can help improve performance, but only up to a certain point
* when arousal becomes excessive 🡪 performance in diminished
* Their experiment demonstrated increasing stress and arousal levels helped focus motivation and attention to the task, but only up to a certain point
* The anxiety a person experiences before an exam is one example of how their law operates:
  + Optimum level of stress can help person focus
  + Too much anxiety can impair person’s ability to concentrate

## Theories of social psychology

# ATTRIBUTION THEORY – HEIDER AND KELLEY

What is attribution theory?

Social psychology: the scientific study of the nature and causes of individual behaviour in social situations

* Major development in 20th century 🡪 development of theories explaining how people infer the reasons behind the behaviour of others

Attribution theory: the process by which people infer the reasons behind the behaviour of others

**HEIDER’S (1958) ATTRIBUTION THEORY**

There are two types of attributions a person can make about another’s behaviour:

* **Internal/dispositional attribution: when the inference about the cause of the persons behaviour is based on their personality attitude etc.**
* **External/situational attribution: when the inference about the cause of the person’s behaviour is due to some external cause (e.g. peer pressure, threats...)**
* e.g. someone is angry because they are bad tempered (internal) or because something bad happened (external)

Heider’s fundamental attribution error:

* people usually take a person’s behaviour at face value and do not sufficiently consider the surrounding circumstances
* **people favour a dispositional attribution for other people’s behaviours 🡪 fundamental attribution error**

**self-serving bias: people can also make attributions about themselves**

* De Michele and colleagues (1998) suggest we distort facts and make situational attributions to maintain self esteem

**KELLEY’S ATTEIBUTION THEORY**

* Developed logical model for judging whether a particular action should be attributed to some characteristic (internal) or the person or the environment (external)
* **Co-variation:** that a person has information from multiple observations, at different times and situations and can perceive the co-variation of an observed effect and its causes
* There are three types of casual info which influence a person’s judgements
  + Consistency
  + Distinctiveness
  + Consensus

**Consistency:** the extent to which the person behaves like this every time across different situations

**Distinctiveness:** across situations – the extent to which the person behaves in the same way in similar situations

**Consensus:** across time – the extent to which the person behaves like this every time the situation occurs.

**HIGH** Consensus + **HIGH** distinctiveness + **LOW** Consistency = **EXTERNAL** Attribution

**LOW** Consensus + **LOW** Distinctiveness + **HIGH** Consistency = **INTERNAL** Attribution

**Example one: Lea does not hand in her maths homework**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **High** | **Low** |
| **Consistency** | No other students submitted their homework | All other students submitted their homework |
| **Distinctiveness** | Lea always submits her maths homework | Lea never hand in her maths homework |
| **Consensus** | Lea never submits homework for any class | Lea always submits homework in all other classes |

**Example two: Michael sneezes loud in his psychology class**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **High** | **Low** |
| **Consistency** | all students sneeze in the class | No other students sneeze in the class |
| **Distinctiveness** | Michael has never sneezed in his psychology class | Michael always sneezes in his psychology class |
| **Consensus** | Michael sneezes in all of his classes | Michael never sneezes in any of hos classes |

# COGNITIVE DISSONACE THEORY – FESTINGER

**Cognitive Dissonance Theory definition: the psychological tension or discomfort a person experiences when they hold two beliefs that are in conflict or when they behave in a way that is inconsistent with their beliefs**

* Festinger (1959) believed people attempt to reduce dissonance either by changing their belief or attitude, or by changing their behaviour
* E.g. student going to truant psych with their friends (behaviour) but believes that attending their psychology class is important to achieving their ATAR (cognition/beliefs), will experience cognitive dissonance
  + May decide they can get into a uni another way (change beliefs)
  + May decide not to truant (change in behaviour)
  + Both alternatives with reduce the dissonance between belief and behaviour
* According to cognitive dissonance theory, there is a tendency for individuals to seek consistency among their cognitions, or their cognitions and behaviours
* When there is an inconsistency between attitudes or behaviours (dissonance), something must change to reduce it.

CD 🡪 INTERNAL CONSISTENCY

**Impacts of cognitive dissonance:**

* make people feel uneasy and uncomfortable, particularly if the disparity between their beliefs and behaviours involves something that is central to their sense of self e.g. behaving in ways which are not aligned with a person’s values may result in intense feelings of discomfort
* a persons behaviour contradicts not just the beliefs that have about the world, but also the beliefs they have about themselves
* the discomfort can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including feelings of
  + anxiety
  + embarrassment
  + regret
  + sadness
  + shame
  + stress
* cognitive dissonance can even influence how people feel about and view themselves, leafing to negative feelings of self-esteem and self-worth

**Three methods to reduce cognitive dissonance:**

* method 1 – Change one or more of the attitudes, behaviour, beliefs so as to make the relationship between the two elements a consonant one
  + This mode of dissonance reduction presents problems for people, as it is often difficult for people to change well-learned behavioural responses (e.g. giving up smoking)
* Method 2 – acquire new info that outweighs the dissonant beliefs
  + E.g. thinking smoking causes cancer will cause dissonance if a person smokes 🡪 new info such as “research has not proved smoking causes lung cancer” may reduce dissonance
* Method 3 – reduce the importance of the beliefs (cognitions, attitudes)
  + A person could convince themselves it is better to “live for today than save for tomorrow”
  + In this way, they would be decreasing the importance of the dissonant cognition

**KEY EXPEIMENT – FESTINGER & CARLSMITH (1959)**

* **Aim:** investigate if making people perform a dull task would create cognitive dissonance through forced compliance behaviour
* **Procedure:** 
  + Used 71 male students as participants to perform a series of dull tasks (e.g. turning pegs in a peg board for an hour)
  + There were three groups
    - Control group: not paid and did not talk to confederate
    - Experimental group 1: paid $1 to tell a waiting participant (confederate) that tasks were really interesting
    - Experimental group 2: paid $20 to tell waiting participant (confederate) that tasks were really interesting
  + Almost all of the participants agreed to persuade the confederate that the boring task would be fun
* **Results**: participants asked to rate the level of fun of the task
  + CG: -0.45
  + EG 1: +1.35
  + EG 2: -0.5
  + i.e. participants rated the task as more fun than the participants that were paid $20
* **conclusions:** 
  + being paid $1 is not sufficient enough incentive for lying so those that were paid this amount experienced dissonance
  + they could only overcome the dissonance by coming to the belief that hat tasks were really interesting and enjoyable
  + being paid $20 provides reason for turning pegs therefor no dissonance