

# SOCIAL INFLUENCE



## KEY DEBATES

- NATURE (biological) vs. NURTURE (learned/society)
- REDUCTIONISM (dispositional & situational factors)
- DETERMINISM (situational factors - external -> obedience)



## EFFECTS OF DISPOSITIONAL FACTORS ON BEHAVIOUR

### LOCUS OF CONTROL (LOC) IN CROWDS

High **internal locus control** = believe behaviour is caused by their own efforts and decisions.  
 High **external locus of control** = believe behaviour is due to luck & external factors outside of their control. **External LOC = more likely to obey & conform.**

### MORALITY OF PRO-SOCIAL & ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

**High levels of morality** = higher levels of pro-social behaviour  
**Lower levels of morality** = anti-social behaviour.

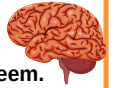


### AUTHORITARIAN PERSONALITY ON OBEDIENCE

From Adorno, 1950. Refers to a person who has high levels of respect for authority, sees world in black & white and dislike of those inferior = **more likely to obey.**

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE BRAIN ON CONFORMITY

Self-esteem & internal LOC = significantly correlated with hippocampal volume. **Small hippocampus/ low volume of grey matter = low self-esteem.**  
**Low self esteem = more likely to conform to a group.**  
**PFC damage** associated with a lack of empathy & anti-social behaviour and the inability to make suitable moral decisions.



### LIMITATIONS

- There is more to obedience/conformity than individual traits - there can be other factors that may prevent the person from being influenced.
- These explanations can be considered reductionist - only focus on certain aspects
- Locus of control can vary from situation to situation and is not constant.

## NATURE

### NatCen [MORRELL ET AL.] (2011) STUDY INTO YOUNG PEOPLE'S RESPONSE TO THE TOTTENHAM (AUGUST) RIOTS

To answer the question: "why did young people get involved in the Tottenham riots?"

#### SAMPLE

36 participants (evenly split between those older or younger than 18).

#### RESEARCH METHOD

Interviews



#### PROCEDURE

- Participants were interviewed 5 weeks after the riots occurred.  
 - Researchers gained full informed consent & confidentiality & anonymity was ensured.  
 - Participants were interviewed individually or in groups – 2 or 4

#### FINDINGS & CONCLUSION

- Four different types of involvement: watchers, rioters, looters, non- involved.
- Different factors made people more likely (nudge factors) or less likely (tug factors) to get involved.
- These were divided into dispositional factors \* situational factors (e.g. having poor job prospects = dispositional, nudge factor. Friends not being involved = situational, tug factor).

**People influenced by what they thought was right or wrong & if benefits outweighed risks.**

#### LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

- Interviews so could have been dishonest because of social desirability (lacks validity).
- Many participants were accessed in prison (not representative of all who took part).

## EFFECTS OF SITUATIONAL FACTORS ON BEHAVIOUR

### GROUP NORM ON CONFORMITY

**Majority influence**= when a person is exposed to the beliefs/ behaviours of a larger group of people & they change their attitudes/ actions to go along the group.

**Compliance** = conform to the group behaviour to gain their approval, but will privately disagree.

**Internalisation** = majority opinion has led you to change your opinion.

**DEINDIVIDUATION & COLLECTIVE BEHAVIOUR**  
 Individuals become part of a **faceless group in crowds** and take on collective behaviour of the crowd & do not think about consequences.

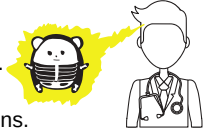


### CULTURE ON PRO-SOCIAL & ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

**Individualist culture** = focused more on personal goals -> more anti-social  
**Collectivist culture** = focused on the needs of the community -> more pro-social.

### AUTHORITY FIGURES

Milgram and The Electric Shock study – with the presence of an authority figure people will commit unreasonable acts.



### AGENCY THEORY

**Autonomous state** = we feel responsible for our own actions.  
**Agentic state** = do not feel responsible as acting under orders from authority figure.

### LIMITATIONS

- Ignores individual differences within collectivist cultures. E.g. some tribes have a complete absence of pro- social behaviour for evolutionary reasons.
- Ignores free will research shows that individuals do have free will and there are many examples of independent behaviour regardless of the situational factors.

## NURTURE

### BICKMAN (1974) STUDY INTO THE POWER OF UNIFORM ON OBEDIENCE LEVELS

To see whether a person's appearance affects obedience

#### SAMPLE

153 pedestrians on the streets of Brooklyn, New York.



#### RESEARCH METHOD/ DESIGN

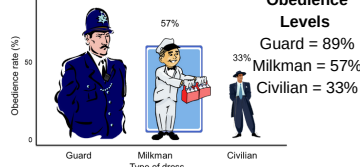
Field experiment - opportunity sample

#### PROCEDURE

- 3 experimenters who dressed in 3 uniforms (a guard, a milkman and a civilian).  
 - In each uniform - gave one of three orders: (1) pick up litter, (2) stand the other side of a bus stop or (3) give someone £ for a parking meter.  
 - Bickman wanted to know how many people obeyed each researchers in each uniform by following the orders or not.

**N.B. There is experiments 2 & 3 to look at.**

#### FINDINGS & CONCLUSION



**The higher the (perceived) status of the uniform, the higher the obedience levels.**

#### LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

- Sample culturally biased (unrepresentative & can't be generalised).
- Field experiment so extraneous variables (noise etc.) an issue.

## KEY CONCEPTS

### CONFORMITY

Giving in to the pressure of the group.

### OBEDIENCE

Following orders from someone we perceive as having more authority than us



### MAJORITY INFLUENCE

when the majority of a group tries to influence others in the group to conform to their beliefs..

### COLLECTIVE & CROWD BEHAVIOUR

the way in which people act when they are part of a group. The behaviour of crowds can often be spontaneous and unplanned, causing people to act in a way they normally wouldn't do.

### ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Actions that go against society and harms it in some way.

### PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Actions that benefit society & its people



## APPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH

### CHANGING ATTITUDES TO MENTAL HEALTH STIGMA & DISCRIMINATION

**1. MINORITY INFLUENCE** is where a small group of people can change the opinion and belief of larger groups. Techniques to use:

- *Behavioural style* – consistent, clear messages with the audience of peers in mind
- *Style of thinking* – understand the majority audience (peers), or sub -groups that they want to influence
- *Commitment* – strongly supporting the minority view
- *Flexibility* – not being too radical in one's views
- *Use of identification* – peer 2 peer delivery of messages

**2. MAJORITY INFLUENCE** could help to change the view of the minority discriminatory view by trying to get them to conform to the group norm and internalise the beliefs.

- *Language* - stop using stigmatised vocabulary – if the majority stop using it then the minority often follow as we often want to be in the in-group
- *Treat mental health as a physical problem* - e.g. someone is off with a broken arm - groups make effort to ensure that they are included when they are back. The same should be done for mental illness.