

Agency Theory

Milgram disagreed with the theory that Nazis had a basic character flaw

His experiments concluded that we are all capable of complying to the demands of an authority figure

Evolution of Obedience

- Milgram observed that society was hierarchical by nature
a system of social organisation ranked from top to bottom
- He thought that its function was to create social order and harmony → obedience is needed to maintain this.
- We are prepared to be obedient as we are exposed to authority figures through socialisation
the process by which we learn the rules and norms of society. P → parents, S → teachers

How it works:

Milgram proposed that we exist in 2 states autonomy and agency.

Autonomy → acting on one's own free will

Agency → when one acts as an agent for another

When given instructions by an authority figure we switch to an agentic state of mind

Moral strain → experiencing anxiety, usually because you are asked to do something that goes against your judgement

Moral Strain occurs inbetween the 2 states and is relieved when shifted into the agentic state. This is because the individual places their **responsibility** onto the authority figure.

Evaluation

E → Milgram's first experiment

- showed signs of moral strain
 - in debrief participants said that their behaviour/actions were the experimenter's responsibility
- Hofling et al (1966)
- nurses justified behaviour as a result of hierarchy and authority in hospital.

A → My Lai (during Vietnam War)

Weaknesses

- doesn't explain individual differences
- hard to define + measure agency and autonomy
- doesn't explain motivational issues behind obedience

Social Impact Theory



Bibb Latané (1981)

Target → person being impacted on
Source → influencer

* Can be used to explain many things (not just obedience!) *

Theory predicts that obedience depends on:
strength, size and immediacy

Principles:

→ Social Forces

strength → determined by status, authority or age
size → how many sources + targets are in the social situation.

immediacy → proximity between the source + target and the presence of buffers.

Concl: authority figures that are perceived to be legitimate, who are immediate to the target and are greater in number are more likely to ensure obedience

→ Psychosocial Law

◦ lightbulb effect

◦ crane neck experiment

↳ increasing no. of confederates = more passers by

BUT no. of passers by grew smaller relative to confederates

Multiplication vs Division of Impact

◦ lone person more likely to help than group (as

responsibility is not diffused when alone)

- miligram - presence of peers lowered obedience to 10%

Evaluation

Strengths

- can predict behaviour under certain conditions.
↳ more descriptive than explanatory
- principles can be observed in everyday behaviour

Weaknesses

- disregards social interaction
- oversimplifies nature of human interaction
- ignores individual differences
- doesn't explain WHY people are influenced by others.
- limited to type of social situation it can explain
↳ eg. football crowds - equal size, strength and immediacy.

The theory is considered to be **static** rather than **dynamic** as it doesn't take into account how the source and target interact with each other.

Milgram's Experiments

Original:

- Lab experiment
- Aim: Investigate ordinary people's obedience to authority and specifically when it involved harming another
- Got participants to electrocute a confederate (with deadly voltages)
- Used **gradual commitment** - volts went up in 15v increments.
- Only male participants (generalisability??)
- He found that **65%** of participants went to the full **450v** and all went to 300v
- Used verbal prods (remove right to withdraw??)

Telephonic Instructions (Ex. 7):

- Initial instructions face to face but then experimenter left the room and gave instructions over telephone
- Creates a buffer (reduces immediacy)
- Many lied to experimenter
- **reduced proximity encourages dissent**
- When he returned to lab disobedience turned to obedience
- Dropped from 65% to **22.5%**.

Run-down Office Block (Ex. 10):

- were previously held at Yale university
- lowers status (linked to hierarchy)
- location/status affects obedience
- dropped from 65% to 48%
- participants questioned credibility on arrival

Ordinary Man Gives Orders (Ex. 13):

- before was experimenter in a lab coat
- no perceived authority
- perceived authority/status is needed for obedience
- experiment described as strained because learner had to go to great lengths to persuade teacher to continue
- dropped from 65% to 20%.

Factors Affecting Obedience

Momentum of Compliance

- (gradual commitment is linked)
- Start with small, trivial requests - participant has committed to experiment
- as requests increased participants feel duty bound
- 15v increments on shock generator
- situation created a binding relationship which escalated steadily

Proximity

- distance acts as a buffer to obedience (telephonic instructions)
- proximity of experimenter ^{and/or} + victim has an affect
- shock generator can also be a buffer to distance (it is easier to drop a bomb than stab)
- the closer the authority figure, the more obedience
- the closer the victim, the lower the obedience level

Status of Authority

- run down office block + ordinary man gives orders
- obedience can only be established when the authority figure is perceived to be ~~effective~~ legitimate

Personal Responsibility

- participants are more obedient when personal responsibility is removed (and given to authority figure)

Individual Differences + Obedience

Personality

Locus of Control - Rotter (1966)

- Internal → responsible for own actions + less influenced by others.
- External → behaviour is beyond their control but due to external factors such as fate → ^{more} influenced
- Consistent with Milgram's findings
↳ obedient people have external LOC + also believe they are not responsible for their actions.
- Research in this area is mixed.

Authoritarian Personality

- Theodor Adorno et al (1950) devised the F-Scale (Facism scale) to detect authoritarian personality ^{traits} ^{traits}
extreme intolerant views based on a right-wing political perspective.
- Milgram + Elms (1966) compared F-scale scores with obedient and disobedient participants.
- Obedient participants have higher F-scale scores and was later found that they were less likely to withdraw → submissive to authority figure?
↳ inclination to punish learner?

Empathy - Burger (2009)

- high levels of empathy = less likely to harm another.
BUT
- were more likely to protest but NOT less obedient

Gender

- males + females are virtually identical when

it comes to obedience. - Milgram, Burger, Blass
However

- Sheridan + King (1972) - shock live puppy
↳ found females far more compliant
- Kilham + Mann (1974) - milgram replication in aus.
↳ found males to be far more compliant.
- could depend on gender combo of teacher, learner and experimenter.

Culture

Individualistic

- eg. America + Britain
- behave more independently and resist conformity

Collectivistic

- eg. China + Israel
- behave as a collective group based on interdependence
↳ cooperation and compliance is important for stability
- Assume collectivistic cultures are more obedient

* Obedience can be affected by gender and culture which come from environmental effects *

Example 8 Mark Questions:

- To what extent can individual differences explain variations in levels of obedience?
- Describe and evaluate research on individual differences and obedience.

Prejudice

Prejudice is an extreme, unfavourable **attitude** with 3 components

(A, B, C)

Cognitive → the stereotypes we hold (thoughts)
↓
overgeneralised beliefs typically based on limited information

Affective → feelings of hostility and hatred

Behavioural → actions eg. avoidance, assault, joke making + discrimination → practice of creating one person/group differently from another

All 3 components may not be present. eg. you may have the cognitive and affective components but will never act due to social norms etc.

Realistic Conflict Theory



Sherif (1966)

Explains prejudice as arising from **conflict** (for resources) between **2** (or more) **groups**.

Evidence - Robber's Cave Experiment

- He found that if he introduced competition between the 2 groups **intergroup conflict** was ~~great~~ created. ↳ real conflict experienced between different groups
- He found that when **superordinate goals** were given, prejudice was reduced. ↳ goals that can only be achieved by cooperation.

Evaluation

E → Robber's Cave Experiment - Sherif.

Anthropological Study - Carol + Melvin Ember
Jigsaw Method - Aronson et al (1978)

M(S) → Field experiment

Gives explanation for reducing prejudice.

M(W) → RCE → groups showed hostility before competition so maybe only 2 groups are needed?

A → immigrants - seen as competition for jobs, housing etc so prejudice occurs.

Social Identity Theory



Tajfel and Turner (1979)

Suggest **only 2 groups** are needed for prejudice to occur.
↓ ↗ ↘
in-group out-group (rival group)

Social Identities

Personal Identity → our own unique qualities, personality and self-esteem.

Social Identity → the attributes of the group (to which we belong)

If social identity is not favourable, personal identity will be negative - which lowers the self-esteem of individuals

Social Comparison

To improve a negative social identity, the positive attributes of the group need to be raised



This is done by defining + emphasising the unique characteristics of the in-group while comparing and derogating the qualities of the out-group. - this is known as:

In-group favouritism → seeing our own group and its members in a positive light and as unique

Negative out-group bias → seeing members of another group as all the same and in a negative light

unique = **heterogeneous** all the same = **homogenous**

Evidence - Klee and Kanwinsky

- 48 boys from same Bristol Comprehensive School
- Categorized into 3 groups based on painting preference (what they thought) but was actually random
- Used a matrix to determine amount of tokens each individual would give to other groups + in turn receive
- Findings → ignored fair alternative and rewarded own group (in-group favoritism)
→ cared more about reducing others rather than increasing own.

Evaluation

E → Klee and Kanwinsky - Tajfel

Blue Eye / Brown Eye - Jane Elliott

M(S) → Random

Reliable

M(W) → Reward giving could be explained as competition rather than favoritism.

Lab-based experiment - encourage demand characteristics
participants behaving in a way they think they should in order to fit what they perceive to be the aim of the experiment.

A →

Stages

- 1) Identification
- 2) Categorisation
- 3) Comparison

Individual Differences + Prejudice

Personality

Authoritarian Personality

- more likely to be hostile to people that are different
- tests for:

- **ethnocentrism** → belief that one's own ethnic group is superior to another
- **conservatism** → a belief in tradition and social order with a dislike for change
- **anti-democratic beliefs** → views that oppose the fair election of gov. + majority rule.

were carried out to test authoritarian personality

- **Thematic Appreciation Test** → inkblot to uncover motivations and attitudes were also used.

Culture

- Katz + Braly - culture does affect prejudice but as cultures change, so do the prejudices they hold
- Individualistic → more interpersonal prejudice
- Collectivistic → more intergroup prejudice
- * Prejudice can be affected by culture, which comes from environmental effects *

Ethics and Social Research

Ethical Issues → potential psychological or physical risks for people in studies

Ethical Guidelines → advice to psychologists to help solve ethical issues.

Psychological research in the UK is regulated by the **British Psychological Society (BPS)**

Purpose of ethical guidelines:

- ensure safety + well-being of participants.
- ensure standards, professionalism + reputation of the subject are upheld.

BPS ethical code is based around 4 principles:

Respect → respect for the dignity of all individuals

Competence → level of professionalism of psychologists

Responsibility → responsibility to participants, public + science

Integrity → avoid situations where they may be seen to exploit others

Breakdown:

C an	C onfidentiality	anonymous?
D o	D eception	lied to?
C an't	C onsent (informed)	fully aware?
D e	D ebrief	told nature @ end?
W ith	W ithdraw (right to)	can leave/remove?
P articipants	P rotection	not subject to harm?

Social Revision

Key Assumptions:

- behaviour is affected by those around us
- culture has an impact on behaviour
- people's attitudes are influenced by others

Research Methods:

- field experiments
- lab experiments

Theories of Obedience:

- Agency Theory → Milgram
- Social Impact Theory → Bibb Latané

Agency Theory

- key evidence → Milgram's research into obedience
→ Hofling et al w/ the nurses.
- 2 states: agentic + autonomous.
- moral strain
- hierarchical society → adaptation.

Theories of Prejudice:

- Realistic Conflict Theory → Sherif
- Social Identity Theory → Tajfel + Turner