

## TYPES OF CONFORMITY – AO1

**Conformity – Process by which an individual's attitudes and behaviours are influenced by other people resulting in an individual adopting these attitudes and behaviours**

- Three types of conformity:
  - Compliance
  - Identification
  - Internalisation

**Compliance – Occurs when an individual accepts influence because they hope to receive a favourable reaction from those around them**

Public agreement with the majority *but* private disagreement

- The attitude or behaviour is adopted not because of its content but because of its reward of approval
- Sometimes people conform and go along with the group even though privately they don't agree temporarily changing behaviour

**Identification – Influence where individual adopts an attitude or behaviour because they want to be associated with a particular person or group**

Public and private agreement with the majority *but* only whilst membership of a group is important

- Elements of both compliance and internalisation – Individuals accept attitudes and behaviours they are adopting as right and true (internalisation) but the purpose of adopting them is to be accepted as member of group (compliance)
- E.g. Child smoking because that's what cool kids do and he wants to be cool

**Internalisation – Individual accepts influence because the content of attitude or behaviour proposed is consistent with their own value system**

Permanent public and private agreement with the majority

- Usually a permanent change in attitude/behaviour both publicly and privately
- Close examination of a groups position may convince an individual they are wrong and the group is right

## EXPLANATIONS OF CONFORMITY - AO1

**Normative Social Influence – Suggests people will conform to fit in and be part of a group to gain approval and avoid disapproval**

- Individuals wish to be liked and respected by the group and do not want to be excluded or stand out due to fear of rejection
- Usually in form of compliance – Very superficial

**Informational Social Influence – Suggests people conform as they have desire to be right**

- People will look to others for a correct answer often resulting in a permanent change in attitudes/behaviour – Internalisation as individual publicly and privately agrees
- Informational social influence is more likely to occur in an ambiguous situation or where others are experts

## EVALUATION OF TYPES AND EXPLANATIONS TO CONFORMITY – AO3

**Difficulties in Distinguishing Between Compliance and Internalisation**

- It is assumed that a person who publicly agrees with majority yet disagrees with them in private must be displaying compliance – Also possible that acceptance has occurred in public yet dissipates in private because information merely forgotten
- Also assumed a person who agrees publicly and privately must have internalised group's view – However they may have merely mixed up their own views with the groups views and agreed all along
- Impossible to measure what a person privately believes – Chance a person is lying

**Research Support for Normative Influence**

- Linkenbach and Perkins (2003) – Adolescents exposed to simple message that majority of their age peers didn't smoke were subsequently less likely to take up smoking
- People shape behaviour out of desire to fit into reference group

**Research Support for Informational Influence**

- Writtenbrink and Henley (1996) – Found participants exposed to negative information about African Americans which they believed was view of majority later reported more negative beliefs about black people
- Exposure to other people's beliefs has important influence on social stereotypes

**ASCH (1951) SOCIAL CONFORMITY – AO1**

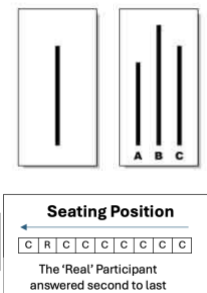
**Conformity** – Process by which an individual's attitudes and behaviours are influenced by other people resulting in an individual adopting these attitudes and behaviours

**Aim:**

To see if participants would conform to majority social influence and give incorrect answers in a situation where the correct answer was always obvious

**Procedure:**

1. Asch used 123 male college students
2. Real participant put in a room with 7 confederates
3. Participants asked to look at three lines of different lengths and took turns to say which line matched a 'standard line'
4. Confederates had agreed in advance their answers to the line task
5. Participants always answered second to last
6. 18 trials were done overall and the confederates gave the wrong answers on 12 trials – Critical trial

**Findings:**

- Asch found participants conformed to the unanimous incorrect answer on 33% of critical trials
- 75% of participants conformed at least once and 25% never conformed to a wrong answer
- In control where participants wrote their answers down on paper instead of saying them out loud participants gave the correct answers over 99% of the time

**Conclusion:**

- During interviews after the experiment most participants said they didn't believe the confederates but had gone along out of fear of being ridiculed or thought peculiar
- Asch displayed compliance as a type of conformity and support for NSI

**VARIATIONS OF ASCH'S STUDY – AO1**

*This could be used in an answer about why people conform.*

**Group Size**

- Little conformity with only one or two confederates
- When 3 confederates conformity levels increased to 32%
- Campbell and Fahey (1989) – Suggest group size may affect the type of judgment and motivation
- When there is no objectively correct answer and the individual is concerned about 'fitting in' then the larger the majority the more likely chance conformity will occur

**Unanimity**

- When person from majority gave wrong answer conformity decreased to 9%
- When real participants were given support of another confederate or real participant conformity levels dropped from 33% to 5.5%
- Breaking groups unanimous position major factor in conformity reduction

**Task Difficulty**

- When the task became more difficult conformity levels increased
- When exposed to maths problems high efficacy participants (participants confident in their own abilities) were more independent than low efficacy participants
- Both situational differences (task difficulty) and individual differences (self-efficacy) are both important in determining conformity

## EVALUATION OF ASCH'S RESEARCH – AO3

### Asch's Research may be Outdated

- Asch's findings may be unique because study took place in particular period of US history where conformity levels were high
- In 1956 US was in strong anti-communist period and people scared to go against majority so increased likelihood of conformity
- Perrin and Spencer (1980) – Repeated Asch's study using students who were studying science and engineering – In initial study only obtained one conforming response out of 396 trials where majority unanimously gave wrong answer
- In subsequent study Perrin and Spencer used youths on probation as participants and probation officers as confederates – Found similar levels of conformity to Asch
- Research suggests conformity more likely if perceived costs of not conforming are high

### Problems with Determining Effect of Group Size

- Bond (2005) – Limitation of research in conformity is that studies have used only a limited range of majority sizes – No studies other than Asch have used majority group greater than nine
- Little research on the effect of much later groups on conformity

### Unconvincing Confederates

- Would be difficult for confederates in Asch's study to act convincingly when giving the wrong answer – Could affect validity of study
- Mori and Arai (2010) – Used Asch's procedure but made one participant wear polarising glasses causing vision to change and make them judge that a different comparison line matched the standard line – For females results closely matched Asch's original findings
- Confederates in Asch's study was actually convincing suggesting high internal validity

### Cultural Differences in Conformity

- Smith Et. Al. (2006) – Analysed conformity rates across different cultures
  - Average conformity rate across cultures 31.2%
  - Average conformity rate across individualist cultures 25%
  - Average conformity rate in collectivist cultures 37%
- Suggested higher conformity level in collectivist cultures as it is viewed more favourably to have a united community

### Further Evaluation

Strengths	Weaknesses
Laboratory study so all variables were controlled – High internal validity so study replicable	Study wasn't an everyday situation and findings couldn't be generalised to reality – Lacks ecological validity
Obvious correct answer so there was something for participants to conform towards – Easy to measure conformity	Biased same as women are in society as well as men and study only used men who were American – Androcentric and ethnocentric – No cultural validity