

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

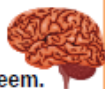
From Adorno, 1950. Refers to a person who has high levels of respect for authority, sees world in black & white and dislike of those inferior = more likely to obey.

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 confirm 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

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

AIM
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

AIM
To see whether a person's appearance affects obedience

SAMPLE

153 pedestrians on the streets of Brooklyn, New York.



RESEARCH METHOD/ DESIGN

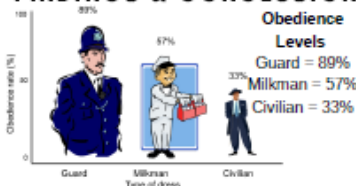
Field experiment - opportunity sample

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.