Social Influence

**Conformity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conformity</th>
<th>The tendency for people to adopt the behaviour, attitudes, and values of a group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compliance (Kelman)</td>
<td>Going along with others to gain approval or avoid disapproval. It is a temporary change where people publicly conform but privately disagree i.e. pretending to like Justin Bieber because all of your friends like him</td>
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<tr>
<td>Internalisation (Kelman)</td>
<td>Going along with others because you’ve accepted their point of view as it’s consistent with yours. Permanent change. I.e. sharing a uni flat with a vegetarian, so you become vegetarian as well. But you continue to stay vegetarian once you’ve left university</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identification (Kelman)</td>
<td>Going along with others as you’ve accepted their point of view but only because you desire to be like them. I.e. you understand why your friends are vegetarian and you then become one, just so you can therefore be accepted by them</td>
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**Normative social influence**

Conformity based on the desire for approval. Most likely to occur when the individual believes they’re under surveillance by the group.

**Informational social influence**

Conformity based on acceptance of information from others as evidence about reality. Most likely to occur if the situation is ambiguous or where others are experts.

Research on explanations for conformity:

- **Normative social influence**
  - Schultz et al - hotel guests were exposed to the message that 75% of guests re-used their towels, and then the guests exposed to that message reduced their need for new towels by 25%

- **Informational social influence**
  - Wittenbrink and Henley - participants were more likely to express negative opinions about African-Americans when previously exposed to negative information about black individuals as they believed this was the viewpoint of the majority
Social Influence

Psycho - social variables

- An explanation of obedience; agentic state and legitimacy of authority

- Agentic state; a mental state where we feel no personal responsibility for our behaviour as we believe that we are working for someone. Relieves us from our conscience and allows us to obey a destructive authority

- Legitimacy of authority; an explanation for obedience which suggests we are more likely to obey people we perceive to have authority over us. Authority here is justified by the individual’s hierarchy.

Agentic state

- Milgram proposed obedience to destructive authority occurs because a person does not take responsibility and instead believes that they are in fact ‘working for somebody’;

- Autonomous state;
  - Opposite of agentic state
  - Autonomy means to be independent or free
  - So a person in an autonomous state is free to behave according to their own principles and therefore feels a sense of responsibility
  - Shift from autonomy to agency is called the agentic shift and milgram said that this happens when someone perceives somebody else as an authoritative figure

- Binding factors
  - ‘Why do so many people remain in this agentic state’ - milgram. He observed that many participants spoke as if they wanted to quit but seemed unable to do so. The answer is binding factors - aspects of the situation that allow the person to ignore or minimise damaging effects of their behaviour and this therefore reduces their moral strain
  - Milgram proposed a number of strategies the individual used for example, denying damage caused to the victims or shift the responsibility to to the victim (blaming)

Evaluation

- Research support
  - Blass and Schmitt showed a film of milgram’s study to students and asked them to say who they believed was responsible for the harm to the learned. The students said the responsibility was due to legitimate authority but also expert authority - aka legitimate authority

- A limited explanation
  - Agentic shift only covers so much, doesn’t explain why those who didn’t obey refused to do so
  - Also doesn’t explain Hofling et al’s study - nurses did not show anxiety when handing responsibility over to doctors