A01 Explanations For Obedience

1) AGENTIC STATE

When certain situational factors are present, we go from an autonomous state to an agent state (aka agentic shift). In this state we are more likely to be obedient as we are not aware of the consequences and are acting under someone else.

2) LEGITIMATE AUTHORITY (real authority - e.g. police)

As our society is a hierarchy, we are brought up to respect and follow orders of authority figures. We follow these orders as we believe the responsibility for our actions lies with authority (social power can be established by wearing a uniform and being in a legitimate environment). This explains destructive obedience.

A03 Evaluations Of Explanations For Obedience

1) Evidence To Support Legitimate Authority

Blass and Schmitt asked students who they blamed for the ‘harm’ to the learner in Milgram’s Study. The believed the experimenter was to blame because he was in a lab coat.

2) Further Evidence

Bickman conducted a field experiment and found more people picked up litter when asked to by a man in a security jacket vs milkman outfit or normal clothes. They’re more willing to obey because he’s wearing a uniform.

3) Stretch & Challenge - helps us understand Nazi Germany and My Lai Massacre.

1) Evidence To Contradict

Milgram’s Study itself contradicts explanations for obedience. We should obey someone with high authority, however 35% did not obey. There must be other explanations as participants disobeyed despite legitimate author and a legitimate environment.

A01 Situational Variables/Explanations Affecting Obedience

Situational factors refer to features of a setting/environment that influence our behaviour. Milgram believes there are numerous situational factors that can influence whether a person is obedient.