**Social Psychology assignment**

**Majority influence**

Majority influence is a type of social influence known as conformity. This is a change in belief or behaviour in light of a real or imagined pressure, without a direct request. (ScienceAid, n.d.) When people encounter a situation where they perceive the group's approval, they may feel pressured to think and act with the group. This can happen for many reasons, including the desire to be recognised or the belief that the majority must be right.

Studies on the effect of majority influence have been conducted widely, with one famous study being the Asch (1951) conformity experiments—the line experiment. In the experiments, participants are shown a line and asked to match it with one of the three matching lines. But the problem is that most of the other participants deliberately answered incorrectly. Therefore, many participants followed the wrong answer, even if the answer was obvious . Each group performed the task 18 times (18 trials). On the first two trials, the confederates answered correctly, but for 12 of the remaining 16 trials they answered incorrectly. These 12 trials were the ‘critical trials’ in the experiment. (PsychTeacher, n.d.). The results from the Asch experiments were surprising considering that the stimuli used had unambiguous lines indicating that participants needed to know the correct answer. In 32% of critical trials, participants followed the majority group answer, while 74% of respondents followed the wrong group at least once. Only 25% of participants did not conform at all. (Psych teacher, n.d.). 

The validity of the Asch experiment is questionable because Asch study was conducted under controlled conditions in a laboratory. This approach lacks ecological validity and will encourage participants to responses to desired traits. However, Asch carefully established a control condition where the confederates would give the correct answers. This was a strength, because it showed the task being easy and ambiguous, thus Asch can say the incorrect answer was down to conformity, not difficulty in determining which lines relate to the correct match. This means the test is a true measure to conformity (increasing the validity).

The reliability of Asch’s study has its strengths and weaknesses. Strengths include that he used a methodical approach meaning that other researchers can replicate the study and check the reliability of the findings. For example, , Asch's research is shown to be a child of its time as a pose to an innate human behaviour. Asch's research was repeated in 1980 by Perrin and Spencer where they found that only 1/396 of the participants conformed, where Asch found 36.8% rate of conformity- a very different outcome. (www.simplypsychology.org, n.d.)

Asch experiment can also be evaluated in terms of ethics. One weakness of the study is that the participants were unaware that it was a study on conformity and social pressure, which prevented them from giving informed consent. (Tutor2u, n.d.) They were told that they were willing to take part in a study on visual perception, therefore there was dishonesty. They were paid to participate, so they were under no obligation to stay the entire period, but they were never made aware that they may leave at any point. According to Asch, a few participants experienced distress and anxiety throughout the experiment. Thus, there was very little participant protection. However, because, had he informed consent, participants would have responded to demand characteristics and their behaviour would have been abnormal. However, Asch interviewed all of his participants following the experiment to overcome this issue. (Sparks, 2022)

However, criticisms of the Asch experiment's conformity rate were 32%. Asch reported that the results of his study were surprising, with participants giving vague answers on 32% of the main trials. However, failing to acknowledge that 68% of crucial trials showed there was no conformity. This study is a more accurate measure of the factors that lead to dissent from the majority than those that lead to greater conformity.

Population validity was a major contributor to the Asch experiment. The participants involved were young students from the same American university. This meant that the results cannot be generalised beyond the sample population and may not apply to anyone other than American male college students.

Asch employed a method of self selected sampling. This has the advantage that his participants would have been inspired to participate. The weakness of this is that participants might have been too eager to participate and reacted more quickly to demand characteristics. This suggests that they might have guessed that Asch was looking at conformity and altered their behaviour to appease him and ensure the success of the experiment.

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**Minority influence**

Minority influence refers to a form of social influence that is attributed to exposure to a consistent minority position in a group. (McLeod, 2018) There are three conditions necessary for this to become the majority opinion. These are consistency, commitment, and flexibility. If you use these, it shows certainty and confidence in your ideas, increasing the effect of your influence.

Moscovici et al. (1969) studied these because they thought that internalisation was the foundation of minority influence. In his lab experiment, he used blue slides of varying brightness. The participants were asked to decide whether they witnessed blue or green slides. There were four subjects and two confederates in each of the three conditions he employed. With regard to the first group, 8.4% of the confederates reported that all 36 slides were green. The last was a control group, with no confederates, while the second group had the confederates state 24 out of 36 slides were green, resulting in 1.3% conformity. Here, he discovered less than 1% conformity. However, they also showed flexibility, as sometimes they reported the slides to be blue. (psychology hacked.org, n.d.)

Moscovici et al. (1969) controlled for extraneous variables such as lighting levels which may affect judgement of colour so the results were a more reliable measure of minority influence being the cause of decision making. (psychology hacked.org)

This promotes a process of consistency and flexibility in minority influence. Nemeth's research challenges the concept of consistency while highlighting the value of flexibility. While Nemeth demonstrates that minorities must be adaptable, Moscovici demonstrates the requirement for consistency. (Tutor2u, 2020). The present study not only supports such conclusions but shows that thought processes are affected even after the confrontation has passed. After expo- sure to the incorrect judgments of "green" to blue slides, subjects' associations to related words "blue". (‌Nemeth, C., & Brilmayer, A. G. (1987)

Further research has been proposed, recent research influences process may actually help people think more creatively. (Nemeth 1976; Nemeth and Wachtler, 1983). The purpose of the study was to have participants embedded figures in a stimulus array. A different point of view that came from either a majority or a minority of a subject in their group was presented. Individuals who were exposed to the oppsorifoj of tje majority tended to follow that position exactly. However, Individuals who were exposed to the pushback from the minority shown a propensity to expand their perspective.

The strengths of the Moscovici study were that his findings have been supported by other research. Wood et al.'s Meta-Analysis (1994): Wood et al. conducted a meta-analysis of over 97 minority groups to explore the impact of consistency on influence. They found that the most consistent groups had the highest level of influence, supporting the importance of consistency in minority groups.(www.siver psychology.co.uk, n.d) . This confirms that consistency is a major factor in minority inf

There is research that supports the internalisation of minority views. This evidence was found in a variation of Moscovici research in which participants were allowed to write down their answers rather than revealing them out loud. When answers were presented in private, an increase in minority agreement changed, showing that participants were influenced by minorities and changed their minds, but did not want to admit this publicly for fear of appearing ‘awkward’. This is a strength because there is clear evidence that minority opinions are being influenced. (‌Study Mind. (n.d.).

However, there have been criticisms of Moscovici’s research due to issues with methodology. The tasks were artificial and do not relate to daily activities involving minority views, so the results do not represent the change of people to the minority in day to day life. Additionally, there are no consequences for their actions, and participants are aware that they knew they were taking part. Therefore, the results lack ecological validity because we cannot be sure whether they have the desired properties in the experiment or whether they are different from people in everyday life.

Lastly, the research is culturally biassed. The sample included American females. It has been shown that females are more likely to be more logical, so the results may be greater. This suggests that more research needs to be conducted in order to determine whether the results generalise to other people and whether they would respond to minority influence in the same way.

**Practical implications**

Majority influence, also known as conformity, is an important concept in psychology that explores how people are influenced by the beliefs and behaviour of the majority. This phenomenon has important consequences for all aspects of society, economics, politics and behaviour. (‌PsychTeacher. (n.d.).

In politics, public opinion and decision making are greatly influenced by majority influence. Politicians frequently employ strategies to influence voters and win support for their programmes, including social media campaigns and public sponsorship. Fundamentally, strong majority influence can lead to poor organisational decisions because people fear retaliation against the majority. A study of American juries shows that in more than 85% of jurors, most of the first vote is the final verdict. Another study found that when a position source compromised 50% of a group's position, there was compliance to that position without carefully analysing the messages from the position. (Zhang, Dongsong, et al. “The Impact of Individualism, pg 53-80, n.d.)

Additionally, understanding majority influence is crucial for creating effective marketing and advertising strategies. Companies employ social proof or evidence of how well liked their products are services are, to influence consumer behaviour in a positive way.

Teachers can utilise the majority influence theory to encourage desirable actions and attitudes in their pupils by highlighting the prevalence of desired behaviours amongst peer groups.

Minority influence is the process by which a small group of people can influence the beliefs, attitudes and behaviour of a large group. This phenomenon has important implications in many areas, such as social movements, organisational decision making and public policy making.

One practical implication of minority influence is the ability to create social change. Research has shown that minority groups can promote alternative perspectives that can lead to change in culture and values (Moscovici, 1985)

For example, the civil rights movement in the US was inspired by the effort of minority groups to fight for equal rights and opportunities for African Americans. (Waude, 2017) Through sustained negotiation and advocacy, they can influence public opinion and effect legislative changes that will lead to racial equality.

 In organisational settings, minority group can influence and impact decision making processes and group dynamics. Research shows that minority views can foster creativity and innovation in groups, resulting in more effective problem solving and decision making. (Nemeth, 1986) By encouraging diversity of thought and groupthink, low impact interventions can help organisations avoid the effect of group population and make better decisions.

In government, lobbyists representing a minority such as a company, charity or trade body seek to influence the views of legislators by publishing research which supports the interests of that minority. (Waude, 2017)

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