



Group Behaviour

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Acculturation

- **Acculturation** is the process by which people adapt to a **new and different culture** to the one in which they have been born and raised (i.e., the opposite to **enculturation**)
- Acculturation occurs when an individual chooses or is forced (i.e. because of war, famine or economic need) to move to and live in another country/culture (the **dominant culture**)
- Acculturation involves an individual **acclimatising** to the dominant culture into which they have moved
 - E.g., a student born and raised in inner London moves to Wales for university and has to learn the **customs** and way of life in Wales
 - a person who has moved from the UK to Brazil in South America will have to acclimatise to the customs, **norms, systems** and **procedures** of the **new cultural environment** in Brazil
- Acculturation can be a positive experience for a migrant, but it can also lead to **acculturative stress**
- Research has found that the most successful and productive **acculturative strategy** is **integration**
- Acculturation is a **bi-directional** process
 - The dominant culture affects the migrant and they in turn affect the dominant culture by introducing new language, foods, religion, art, music, etc.

Acculturation & mental health

- The process of acculturation can be **difficult and problematic** because:
 - inconsistencies and conflicts between members of the dominant culture and migrants may arise
 - acculturating migrants may not wish to immerse themselves in the dominant culture (which is known as **separation**)
 - acculturating migrants may discard their original culture completely in order to fit in with the dominant culture (known as **assimilation**)
- Any **conflict** between acculturating groups can result in **acculturative stress**
 - Stress can occur when assimilation is required by the dominant culture, but this idea is not shared by members of migrant culture
 - A clash of **cultural norms** can also produce acculturative stress
- **Acculturative stress** may have hugely negative consequences
 - It may lead to **depression, anxiety, PTSD, and suicidal ideation**, all of which are serious threats to a person's **mental health**

Research which supports acculturation & mental health



Inman et al. (2007)

Aim:

- To investigate **ethnic identity** and acculturative stress in first-generation Indian Hindu parents living in the USA

Participants:

- 16 first-generation Indian Hindu parents (8 female; 8 male) who had moved to the USA in the late 1960s/early 1970s
- The parents had all been over 20 years old when they had **emigrated** and were all fluent in English
- Both **purposive** and **snowball sampling methods** were used to obtain the sample

Procedure:

- Prior to the interview, participants were asked to **classify** themselves as either 'very Indian/somewhat Indian/**bicultural**/somewhat American/very American'
- They were asked to elaborate on this description of themselves in the interview
- **Semi-structured** interviews were then conducted

Results:

- After analysing the **transcripts**, the researchers drew up **themes** and **categories** which had **emerged** from the data:
 - **Ethnic identity:**
 - The most common **self-categorisations** (gathered from the pre-interview questionnaire) were 'very Indian' alongside 'bicultural'
 - This supports Berry's idea that integration is the most successful acculturative strategy
 - **Factors contributing to ethnic identity retention**
 - Participation in **cultural celebrations** and activities
 - Maintaining **traditional values** and upbringing
 - Strong family ties
 - Need for **social support** for both mothers and fathers
 - **Children's bicultural experiences**
 - Both parents noted bicultural influences on children
 - Challenges in maintaining cultural continuity
 - Biculturalism generally viewed as a strength



■ Main challenges

- Obstacles from Western culture (e.g., inflexible work schedules, lack of
- Indian cultural centres/schools)
- Lack of specific cultural knowledge
- Struggles applying their own experiences to raising children
- Fear of intermarriage leading to generational distance

Conclusion:

- First-generation immigrant parents are **able to acculturate successfully** but this is not without its problems
- A lack of **opportunity** to celebrate and practice one's own culture may lead to acculturative stress

Evaluation of acculturation & mental health

Strengths

- Research into acculturation is extremely valuable, given the plight of many people who are compelled to leave their home country due to political/financial/family factors
 - This gives research in this field good **external validity**
- The results of the interviews in the above study were cross-checked (with the question asked prior to the interview) and confirmed between researchers and by an **external auditor**
 - This gives the research good **internal validity**

Limitations

- It is possible that the parents could have discussed what they were going to say in the interviews prior to them being conducted, which would impact the **validity** of their responses
- A sample of 16 parents is very small and means that the results are not easily **generalised**

Link to concepts

Measurement

- Semi-structured interviews – as used in the above study – allow participants some **freedom** in responses and some control over discussion direction
 - This can lead to valuable ideas and information emerging which the researcher might not have considered prior to the research
- Qualitative research tends to be given **lower status** than **experimental methods**
 - This is short-sighted, as qualitative data can reveal aspects of the human condition that quantitative methods cannot

Responsibility

- Research involving migrants as participants is **socially sensitive**, which researchers should bear in mind when conducting the research but particularly when publishing their findings
 - Misinterpreted comments/findings could be exploited negatively by the media
 - Asylum seekers, refugees and migrants are often vilified in the press so the researcher has a **duty of care** towards their participants and should avoid reinforcing negative stereotypes or fuelling hostile immigration debates



Your notes



Commitment

- **Compliance** is the act of responding positively to a **request** or an **offer**
 - E.g., a request for donations (**explicit** request) or an advert presenting the latest deal on smartphones (**implicit** request)
- People are usually **aware** that they are being asked/targeted to take action (i.e., by donating money/purchasing a product/behaving in a certain way)
 - Compliance techniques are not generally **subliminal** but they may be **subtle** and sophisticated
 - There is a reason why compliance techniques are widely and extensively used by salespeople!
- One compliance technique is **commitment**
- **Prior** commitment is based on the idea that people are more likely to behave in a particular way if they have **already been encouraged** to behave in that way
 - E.g., You've already agreed to look after your niece, so you feel that you can't say no to looking after your nephew too
- Prior commitment involves getting **active and willing participation** from someone who may not have initially set out to behave that way
 - E.g., You had no plans at all to babysit for a whole day yet here you are looking after two young children for 8 hours!
- In essence, prior commitment involves securing an **agreement or intention** from people to behave in specific ways as determined by the person/business/organisation that has used the compliance technique
 - E.g., Your aunt and uncle knew how to get your commitment to babysit so that they could enjoy a nice day out and escape their children for a while!

The effect of commitment on prosocial behaviour

- **Prosocial behaviour** is any form of behaviour that is **beneficial** to another person or to **society** as a whole
- The ultimate **aim** behind encouraging prosocial behaviour is to communicate the **core values** which the person/group/organisation wishes to **promote**, which could include:
 - to exercise **care** and **kindness** to others
 - to be a **responsible citizen**, a **custodian** of the planet
 - to uphold the **legal, moral and ethical values** (in someone's home city, country or the world in general)



- Prosocial behaviour may be promoted via several different **sources**, including:
 - **governments** (e.g., TV adverts asking people to recycle)
 - **schools** (e.g., nurturing key prosocial behavioural traits in children)
 - **global corporations** (e.g., Coca Cola's 'Open Happiness' campaign that put the emphasis on spreading positive 'vibes' and prosocial acts rather than on profit)
- The **operationalising** of prior commitment in people is a key step towards bringing out prosocial behaviours in them
 - It fosters in people the idea of **shared responsibility** and a **duty of care** towards others

Research which supports compliance technique: commitment

Dickerson et al. (1992)

Aim:

- To investigate the extent to which prior commitment is linked to prosocial behaviour.

Participants:

- 80 female students from a college in Santa Cruz, California (USA)
- The participants were all competitive swimmers
- The sample was obtained via **opportunity sampling**

Procedure:

- The **independent variable** involved the following four **conditions**:
 - **Condition 1:** Each participant was approached by a female **confederate** as she was on her way from the swimming pool to the shower block
 - Each participant was given a **questionnaire** about how much water they used while showering (their **water consumption**)
 - **Condition 2:** Each participant was asked to **sign a poster** which said, '*Please conserve water. Take shorter showers*'
 - The confederate also drew the participants' attention to **water-conservation** posters which had been put up around the campus
 - **Condition 3:** Each participant answered the questionnaire (as for condition 1) and then signed the poster (as for condition 2)
 - **Condition 4: The control condition** – participants in this condition were not approached, i.e., there was no **manipulation** on the part of the researchers
- A second female confederate then occupied one of the shower cubicles in the shower block
 - She **timed** the length of each participant's shower once they had finished speaking to the first confederate

Results:

- The results per condition were as follows:

Condition	Mean (in seconds) of showering time
1. Questionnaire only	248.3
2. Poster only	241.05
3. Questionnaire and poster	220.5
4. Control condition	301.8

- The participants in condition 3 who had made the **prior commitment** of signing the poster and answering the questionnaire on their use of water spent less time showering than participants in the other three conditions

Conclusion:

- Making a prior commitment to use less water influences the subsequent prosocial behaviour of using less water while showering.

Evaluation of compliance technique: commitment

Strengths

- Understanding how commitment works can be hugely beneficial in a range of prosocial contexts
 - E.g., encouraging recycling/healthy eating/anti-bullying, etc.
- The use of **naïve participants** in the above study means that the findings are high in **ecological validity**
 - Naïve participants will not exhibit **demand characteristics** due to their lack of **awareness** that they are taking part in a study
 - As far as the participants were concerned, they were simply doing what they always did (e.g., showering after swimming); hence, their behaviour was **unforced** and natural

Limitations

- It is very difficult to **convert** people's prosocial **intentions or promises** into actual prosocial behaviour
 - People may say that from now on they will use fewer plastics but whether or not this is borne out by their behaviour is something that researchers may never know
- Only one confederate timed the length of the showers, which means that:

- she may have missed the start or the end of the showering sessions; a second confederate should have been used to ensure **reliability**

Link to concepts

Causality

- Dickerson's study takes place in the field yet it is designed along the lines of a **lab experiment** (as far as is possible when outside of lab conditions)
- Operationalising the independent variable is not always possible in field experiments, which makes this research quite unique
- The manipulation of the IV using four conditions means that the researchers were able to impose some degree of manipulation over the procedure, which gives the research reliability (plus, it uses a **standardised procedure** which is **replicable**)
 - The extent to which this research is fully replicable is, however, limited, as the **human variables** (approaching the swimmers, timing their showers) can never be matched exactly with each replication

Responsibility

- There are real **ethical concerns** over the procedure because:
 - the students were not aware that their showering time was being timed (**deception**)
 - their **privacy** was breached due to the intimate nature of the way in which the data was obtained (they were essentially being spied on)
 - the participants were not able to give **informed consent** or be given the **right to withdraw**



Conformity

- **Conformity** is a type of social influence which involves someone **changing, adapting** or taking on **new behaviours** to **fit in with the group**
- Conformity could also be known as **majority influence**, as people tend to want to conform to **larger groups** (bringing safety in numbers)
- **Minority influence** (conforming due to the influence of one person or a small group) does happen, but it is less common

Explanations of conformity

- **Conformity** can be explained as stemming from two different **motivations**:
 - **Normative social influence (NSI)**: the need to be **liked/accepted** by the group (the fear of **rejection**)
 - **Informational social influence (ISI)**: the need to know **what to do** (fear of social **disapproval/humiliation**)

Normative social influence (NSI)

- **NSI** occurs when an individual is keen to adopt the **social norms** of a specific group
 - E.g., Wearing black all the time because that is what the group do
- Someone is more likely to be affected by NSI if they feel that their behaviour and attitudes do not **align** with those of the group
 - E.g., 'I stopped going to church years ago but the group goes every week'
- This lack of **cohesion** with the group may cause **anxiety**, which in turn may lead to an **adjustment** in behaviour
 - E.g., 'I'm going to start attending church with the group so that they feel that I am one of them'
- NSI may involve an individual going **against** their **inner beliefs, ideals or opinions** in order not to be **rejected** by the group
 - E.g., Agreeing with the group that a new film is rubbish while secretly having enjoyed it
- NSI as an **explanation of conformity** is linked to **compliance**
- The essence of NSI is **emotional**, as it is based on the **need to be liked** and accepted

Informational social influence (ISI)

- **Informational social influence (ISI)** tends to take place when the individual is **unsure** and/or **lacks knowledge** about what to do or how to behave in a specific situation



- E.g., On someone's first day at work, they will look to others for **cues** as to how to behave in the office, where to go at lunchtime, the appropriate dress code, etc.
- ISI occurs when the **individual** looks to the **group** for **guidance**
- ISI can occur when there is a **crisis** and a **decision** needs to be made quickly
 - The assumption that follows is that the group knows what to do (even if this assumption is incorrect)
- Someone is more likely to be affected by ISI if they are **insecure** about what is deemed 'right/wrong' behaviour
 - E.g., Someone collapses in the street but no one stops to help them, so the individual assumes that the situation is not serious; thus, no help is given
- ISI as an **explanation** of conformity is linked to **internalisation**
- The essence of ISI is **cognitive**, as it is based on **information processing**

The effect of conformity on group behaviour

- The effect of conformity on **group behaviour** is demonstrated effectively with this classic study from **Asch (1951)**

Aim:

- To investigate the effect of majority influence on behaviour.

Participants:

- 50 male students from a university in the USA
- The participants believed that they were taking part in a vision test (i.e., they did not know the true nature of the study, so were **naive participants**)

Procedure:

- One participant (who was always seated at the end of a row with seven **confederates**) is asked to state which of three lines to the right of a card is the same length as the line on the left of the card, for example:



Asch's study involved participants studying lines on a card

- The experimenter then asks each participant in turn to state which of the three lines on the right of the card are the same length as the **target line** on the left of the card



- In the **critical** trials the confederates always give the same wrong answer, so the **dependent variable** is measured as the number of **conforming** answers to the wrong answer

Results:

- The rate of conformity was **32%** on the critical trials (where confederates all gave the same wrong answer)
- **74%** of the participants conformed at least once
- **26%** of the participants did not conform on any of the trials
- In one variation Asch the participant took part in the procedure with no confederates present
 - Conformity in this condition was less than **1%**

Conclusion:

- People will conform to giving an incorrect answer due to normative social influence

Evaluation of conformity & group behaviour

Strengths

- Understanding how majority influence affects the individual is useful on a number of levels:
 - Analysing **crowd behaviour**, particularly **anti-social** acts that may occur during protests
 - Knowing why some people are not given help in an emergency (also known as **diffusion of responsibility**)
- Asch's study is well controlled
 - The **independent variable** was manipulated while other variables were kept constant (e.g., the same line stimuli, the number of confederates, the placing of the participant in the row)
 - This means that it is high in **reliability**

Limitations

- Neither explanation for conformity explains why some people **resist** both NSI and ISI, e.g., freedom fighters, rebels, iconoclasts
 - The above observation means that both explanations for conformity cannot be **generalised** to everyone
 - to this extent they cannot account for **individual differences**
- It is rare for both NSI and ISI to be tested in **real** conditions
 - Most research in this field is **lab-based**
 - Lab-based research is low in **mundane realism**, which reduces the scope of its **external validity**

Link to concepts

Causality

- One of the key questions surrounding Asch's study is the extent to which demand characteristics invalidate the findings
 - Participants were asked to perform an unusual and highly **artificial** task, which may have led to the participants feeling self-conscious
 - Any self-consciousness would translate to them not behaving as they would with a less contrived task
 - The second demand characteristic is that the task is so easy and **unambiguous**
 - It is possible that participants gave the same wrong answer as the confederates simply because their answer was so **obviously wrong** that the participants may have wondered, 'What do they know that I don't? Is this a trick?' and may thus have followed the wrong response more out of wariness than conformity

Bias

- Asch's study has both gender bias and culture bias due to its all-male, US sample
 - The findings do not account for how normative social influence might affect women or people from other cultures
- Participant bias is also an issue with this research
 - Participants respond differently to a task or situation *because* they are participating in a study, often because they wish to fit in with the group
 - In other words, the participants who conformed to the incorrect answer may not show a similar degree of conformity in real life



Your notes



Cultural dimensions & group behaviour

- Between 1971 and 1973 Geert Hofstede, a professor from Maastricht University conducted a huge, global **survey** of IBM employees focused on **cultural attitudes** and **behaviours**
- The survey was in the form of a **questionnaire** to which over 60,000 people from over 50 countries responded
- Hofstede concluded that **cultural dimensions** could be used universally to describe the **norms** for behaviour within cultures
- From the results of the survey Hofstede was able to categorise cultural dimensions
 - One of the most researched cultural dimensions is **individualism/collectivism**

Individualism vs collectivism

Individualistic cultures	Collectivist cultures
Emphasis on 'I/me' rather than 'we/us'	Emphasis on groups (family, colleagues, community, society)
Prioritise independence, competitiveness, self	Prioritise interdependence, consideration of others, group harmony
Members may enjoy freedom and choice	Members may enjoy community and belonging
Risk: may feel isolated and unsupported	Risk: may feel lack of personal identity and autonomy
Behaviour often revolves around the individual	Behaviour often revolves around the group

Cultural dimensions & conformity

- **Conformity** is the act of putting aside true beliefs, attitudes and values for the sake of **group harmony**
 - This aligns more with **collectivist cultural values**
 - Individualistic cultures value the individual over the group
- Researchers have focused on conformity as a **variable** by which to measure **cultural differences** because each culture may be easily seen in attitudes towards conformity



- Are collectivist cultures more conformist than individual cultures?
- Is there a **standard method** for assessing conformity across cultures?

Research support for cultural dimensions & group behaviour

Smith & Bond (1993)

Aim:

- To investigate **conformity** as a product of **culture**

Participants:

- The study was a **meta-analysis** comprising of 133 studies, from 17 countries which **represented** both collectivist and individualistic cultures
- The countries included France, Fiji, Ghana, Hong Kong, Japan, the UK, and the USA

Procedure:

- The meta-analysis used **statistics** to analyse the findings of **cross-cultural replications** of **Asch's original study** (which in itself had nothing to do with culture)
- Smith & Bond combined the findings of these studies to draw an overall **conclusion** about rates of conformity in collectivist cultures compared to individualistic cultures
- The findings are expressed as an **effect size**; in the case of this study, this was linked to overall rate of conformity per country

Results:

- The highest rates of conformity were seen in more collectivist countries:
 - The effect size from studies in **Fiji was the highest at 2.48**
 - Hong Kong scored 1.93
 - Japan scored 1.42
- The **lowest rates of conformity** were found in individualist countries:
 - The effect size from studies in **France was 0.56**
 - The Netherlands scored 0.74
 - The USA scored 0.90

Conclusion:

- Conformity may be affected by culture, with collectivist cultures showing more conformity than individualistic cultures.

Evaluation of cultural dimensions & group behaviour

Strengths



- A meta-analysis provides a large amount of quantitative data taken from research across the world, which is a time-saving method which can highlight **patterns and trends** instantly
- Using replications of Asch's conformity research means that the researchers had access to the results of studies which used a **standardised procedure**, which should ensure that there is in-built **reliability**

Limitations

- The reliability of the findings is compromised, as there was no **consistency** in the numbers of Asch replications per country
 - The meta-analysis used only two studies from France and Fiji but used 79 from the USA
- A meta-analysis is a rather 'cold' method to use for investigating human behaviour, as it is purely statistical and cannot provide any explanation as to why conformity might occur more in collectivist cultures

Link to concepts

Measurement

- One of the problems with trying to define and measure culture is that it is a **multi-layered and nuanced variable**, subject to **fluctuation** and **anomalies**
- An **etic** approach assumes some values are universal, but this risks bias and oversimplification.
- An **emic** approach provides culture-specific insights, but it is time-consuming and may lead to misinterpretation
- **Smith & Bond (1993)** measured conformity across countries, but a country is not the same as a culture, which limits the validity of their conclusions

Change

- Globalisation brings cultural change, often replacing traditional values with those of a dominant culture
- This process can **merge values** in ways that reduce cultural distinctiveness, affecting both dominant and indigenous groups
- As a result, it becomes increasingly **difficult to draw meaningful conclusions** about the differences between individualistic and collectivist cultures



Social identity theory & group behaviour

- **Social identity theory (SIT)** refers to the identity an individual forms of themselves based on their **group memberships**
- An individual's social identity is a combination of the various different **ingroups** to which they belong
 - E.g., family, college, psychology class, rugby team etc.
- An individual may choose their **ingroups** but there are many ingroups over which an individual has no control
 - E.g., nationality, given sex at birth, ethnicity, age group
- Groups to which an individual does not belong are known as **outgroups**
- Negative attitudes towards outgroups can lead to **prejudice** and **discrimination**

Social categorisation

- **Social categorisation** is the process by which people arrange others into groups according to specific **group characteristics**
 - E.g., . Millennials, Boomers, Americans, Italians, punks, hippies, etc.
 - Social categorisation can be a starting point by which **stereotypes** form
- Social categorisation occurs as an easy way of understanding others, as it requires little **cognitive energy**
- **Social comparison** is the process by which an individual or group **compares** themselves either favourably (**downward comparison**) or unfavourably (**upward comparison**) to other groups
 - E.g., downward comparison would be a businessperson looking down on someone who is unemployed
 - Upward comparison would be a businessperson looking up to someone who is a highly successful entrepreneur billionaire

SIT & ingroup preference

- **Homogeneity** of the outgroup and **positive distinctiveness** of the ingroup (also known as **ingroup favouritism**) are processes by which:
 - the ingroup appears as a collection of distinct, varied **individuals**
 - the outgroup is viewed as a '**mass**' of identical, indistinct members with no individuality
- **Favouring** the ingroup can mean that the outgroup is easier to dismiss and, more worryingly, to **demonise**

- E.g., Jewish people in pre-war Germany were reduced to a set of unpleasant, negative characteristics by anti-semitic propaganda to the extent that they simply became 'them' as opposed to 'us' (i.e., the German people)



Research support for SIT & group behaviour

Tajfel (1972)

Aim:

- To investigate social identity theory in terms of preference for the ingroup via the **minimal groups paradigm**

Participants:

- 48 males aged 14–15 from the same state school in Bristol, UK

Procedure:

- The boys were **randomly allocated** to three groups, each consisting of 16 members
- They were shown slides of paintings by **Klee** and **Kandinsky** and asked to state their preference
- They were then told that their group assignment was based on this preference, but in reality, this was not the case — the groups were **minimal groups** created artificially
- The boys were not told who else was in their group, and there was **no face-to-face contact** with other members
- Each boy was shown individually to a cubicle and asked to **assign virtual money** to other participants, either to their **ingroup** (same artist preference) or **outgroup** (other artist preference)
- They only knew participants by a **code number** indicating group membership (ingroup or outgroup), not by identity
- The trials were **randomised** and tested different allocation strategies, including:
 - **maximum joint profit** (benefiting both groups)
 - **maximum ingroup profit** (benefiting their own group)
 - **maximum difference** (favouring their ingroup while disadvantaging the outgroup)

Results:

- The boys tended to favour the ingroup members, choosing to go for a higher reward and to **penalise** the outgroup
 - They went for the choice which **maximised** the biggest profit/loss difference between the ingroup and the outgroup, often at the expense of possible maximum joint profit
- This was based solely on the **idea** of the other group rather than on any **actual interaction** between ingroup and outgroup members, even when the difference between the groups was minimal



- Group membership was not based on any shared group characteristics but on the (illusion) that the other boys in the group also preferred the same artist

Conclusion:

- Ingroup favouritism can be manipulated via the minimal groups paradigm
- People use social categorisation to make decisions; i.e., simply knowing that another (rival) group exists is enough to suggest the idea of 'us' and 'them'

Evaluation of SIT & group behaviour

Strengths

- SIT provides a clear **framework** for understanding how people categorise themselves and others into groups
 - This could help to inform **interventions** to tackle racism, bullying and other forms anti-social behaviours based on group membership
- The boys in the above study did not meet or see the ingroup/outgroup members
 - This increases **validity** as it eliminates possible sources of **bias** from the decision as to how to award money
 - E.g., physical **appearance** and **personality** factors cannot have influenced the decisions made in the task

Limitations

- SIT over-emphasises the influence of group membership
 - People have **agency** over their actions; they are not solely at the mercy of group pressure
- There was no **jeopardy** involved in Tajfel's task
 - Assigning virtual money to faceless strangers does not reflect real-life situations; therefore, the study lacks **ecological validity**

Link to concepts

Causality

- SIT is based on the idea that people sort others into categories according to a range of usually superficial criteria: age, gender, and employment, for example
 - While this is at least anecdotally apparent, it is an unformed and vague theory, making it difficult to test and to measure
 - People are **complex** and may view others via the prisms of personal and social identity, rather than adopting the rather mechanistic approach of labelling and categorising others as if they were jars of jam!

Bias

- The boys in Tajfel's study might have succumbed to participant expectations, which is a form of **bias**

- They might have thought that a particular response was being sought by the researchers (i.e., rewarding the ingroup over the outgroup)
- It is possible that the study was set up in a way that made the schoolboys conclude that they were supposed to show preference for their Klee/Kandinsky ingroup and so they behaved accordingly
- Children in this age group are used to being guided to the 'right' response by adults, so perhaps the boys were influenced thus rather than being influenced by the mechanisms of SIT



Your notes



Social learning theory

- **Social learning theory (SLT)** is based on the idea that humans learn behaviours from others within **social contexts**
- Learning occurs through the **observation and imitation** of role models
 - A role model is someone important to the child (e.g., parent, sibling, peer, celebrity)
- Observation leads to **imitation** of the role models' behaviour, especially if that behaviour is seen to be **rewarded**

Reinforcement

- SLT uses the principles of **operant conditioning** to explain how social learning occurs
- **Direct reinforcement** is where behaviour is rewarded directly
 - *E.g., Billy enjoys shouting at the TV with his dad and feels good when doing so*
- **Vicarious (indirect) reinforcement** is where behaviour is rewarded when observed in others
 - *E.g., Billy sees his brother praised for aggression in football, so he imitates it*
- Vicarious reinforcement may encourage children to view **aggression** as acceptable if it helps achieve goals
 - *E.g., Cassie sees her sister threaten younger children, who comply out of fear*

Observational learning (ARRM)

- SLT is based on **observational learning**, which can be broken down as follows:
 - **Attention**: noticing the behaviour
 - **Retention**: remembering the behaviour
 - **Reproduction**: imitating the behaviour
 - **Motivation**: desire to repeat the behaviour.

SLT & group behaviour

Bandura et al. (1961)

Aim:

- To investigate **observational learning** in children when exposed to an aggressive adult role model

Participants:



- 72 children (36 boys, 36 girls), mean age = 4 years
- From Stanford University day nursery (California, USA)
- Aggression levels pre-rated by nursery staff; **matched pairs design** ensured equal distribution of aggression levels across conditions

Procedure:

- Controlled observation with three phases:
 1. **Observation phase (10 mins):**
 - Children watched either:
 - **Aggressive model** (physical/verbal aggression towards Bobo doll, repeated x3)
 - **Non-aggressive model** (calm behaviour)
 - **No model** (control group)
 - Both same-sex and opposite-sex models were used equally
 2. **Mild aggression arousal:**
 - Child taken to a room with attractive toys
 - Told the toys were for another child so frustration was induced
 3. **Test for imitation (20 mins):**
 - Child taken to a room with aggressive and non-aggressive toys (including a Bobo doll)
 - Observed through a one-way mirror
 - Researchers recorded **direct imitation** (e.g., punching/kicking) and **non-imitative aggression**

Results:

- Children in the **aggressive model condition** showed more **directly imitative aggression** (punching, kicking, hitting with a toy hammer)
- No such imitation in non-aggressive or control conditions
- **Same-sex imitation** was stronger (boys imitated male models more)
- **Boys overall** displayed more physical aggression than girls.

Conclusion:

- Aggression can result from **observational learning**
- Behaviours observed in one setting can be **reproduced in a different setting**, supporting **SLT**

Evaluation of social learning theory & group behaviour



Your notes

Strengths

- SLT explains how individuals adopt the norms and values of a group via observation and imitation
 - This has good **application** to school settings, as it can be applied to encourage learning and engagement across the age and ability range
- The findings of Bandura's study highlighted the importance of children's TV viewing being restricted to content suitable for their age, as it was thought that watching violence on TV might encourage further imitative violence in real-life situations

Limitations

- Children observe violent, aggressive behaviour in natural settings, often involving adults they know well which means that Bandura's study lacks **ecological validity**
- There are **ethical considerations** which were not adhered to when this study was conducted – particularly **protection of participants from harm** – which means that the procedure could not be **replicated** today

Link to concepts

Measurement

- Using a controlled observation such as in Bandura's study goes some way towards addressing the idea that behaviour can be measured **scientifically**
 - This is due to his use of a **standardised procedure**, clear operationalising of the IV with other **variables** kept constant
 - However, uncontrolled variables could have influenced the result
 - E.g., the **home life** of each child, their **mood** on the day, and their IQ, **social skills and personality**

Causality

- SLT is a type of environmental determinism, suggesting that aggression is learned from observing and imitating role models
 - This implies that aggressive behaviour is shaped by external reinforcement, leaving little room for **free will** or personal responsibility
 - Bandura developed SLT into social cognitive theory, which includes reciprocal determinism as a key concept
 - This is a more **developed** version of SLT as it acknowledges that individuals can influence their environment as well as vice-versa