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**1. Outline one ethical issue that has arisen in social influence research. Refer to one or more social influence studies in your answer. [4 marks]**

**Ans.**

One ethical issue that has arisen is the use of deception. Deception involves misleading participants about the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed or any other aspect. For example, in Asch's classic research on conformity, participants were misled about the true purpose of the study. They were told that their visual acuity was being judged whereas in reality, their performance of judgment of line lengths on a line task in response to social pressure was being assessed.

**2. Charlie has just started at a new school. He has become friendly with a group of boys in his year group. Charlie thinks they are 'cool'**

**One day, one of the more popular boys in the group suggests they all wear their school jumpers inside-out for a week, 'just to see what will happen'. Charlie worries about this all night but still goes to school the following day wearing his jumper inside-out.**

**Use your knowledge of conformity to explain Charlie's behaviour [6 marks]**

**Ans.**

Charlie's behaviour can be explained through NSI - normative social influence. NSI explains conformity as following the requests of a group to gain its approval or to be accepted by it. Charlie thinks that the group is 'cool' suggesting that he must be desiring their approval as he thinks highly of them. However, he does worry about wearing the jumper inside out, showing that he does not really agree with the idea, further suggesting that his wearing the jumper in the said style is just out of desire to be accepted.

Charlie's behaviour can also be explained through identification. Identification involves temporarily changing one's public behaviour and private beliefs to belong to a group, in their presence. Since Charlie has just started school and finds the group 'cool,' there is a strong chance that he wants to be part of it, indicating identification. Also, despite his disagreement in wearing the jumper inside out, his still wearing it suggests that he wants to strengthen his bond with the group.

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3. Later that day, the headteacher calls each of the boys in the group to his office one-by-one, including Charlie.

He explains that the school jumper should not be worn inside-out, and that a detention will be given to any boy who disobeys. From then on, each boy wears their jumper correctly.

Use your knowledge of obedience to explain the boys' behaviour. [6 marks]

Ans.

One reason for the boys' obedience is the legitimacy of authority. This involves following the order of a person who has rightful power in a given situation. The headteacher, who has commanded the students to correctly wear the jumpsuit has the rightful power to punish them if they do not follow his orders. This power is conferred to him by the school which is why he warns the boys that detention will be the consequence of not obeying his orders.

Another reason is the agentic state. This involves holding the authority figure responsible for any consequences of being obedient. In the given scenario, once the boys wear the jumpsuits correctly, if they feel it conflicts with their desire to fit-in with the group, they can attribute the responsibility to the headteacher. Especially in the case of Charlie, who wants approval from the group, he will find it helpful to hold the headteacher responsible for going against group expectations.

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**4. Discuss consistency and flexibility as processes involved in minority influence. [8 marks]**

**Ans.**

Consistency refers to maintaining a unified and stable position by the minority against the majority overtime. This approach can influence the majority to have a more favourable view towards the minority as repeating its position arouses attention in the majority. Flexibility is being open to change and compromise, at least to an extent on part of the minority group. This also works because it makes the minority group appear less dogmatic and more approachable and reasonable to the majority group.

One strength of the consistency process is that it is supported by research evidence. A classic study done by Moscovici established a cause-effect relationship between consistency of minority position and change in the views of the majority. In his study, Moscovici asked his assistants to pose as genuine participants and keep giving a different answer from the majority to persuade them to change their view. Slides in shades of blue and green were shown to participants who were asked to identify the shade colour. The minority kept calling the blue slides as 'green' on all trials and this consistency caused 8.4% of the majority to agree and refer to those slides as being green in colour. In contrast, when the minority was made to show inconsistency, agreement dropped down to 1.3%. Supporting findings like these increase the validity of the consistency explanation of minority influence.

One weakness of these processes in minority influence is that they raise ethical concerns about manipulating behaviour. Knowledge that consistency and flexibility can change majority opinions could be misused by minority groups to push forward propaganda and seek selfish gains. For example, a small group of fashion influencers might promote a new trend, like wearing expensive designer clothes, while pretending to be flexible by suggesting cheaper options. Over time, their constant promotion could pressure people to follow the trend, even if it doesn't suit their budget or personal taste. This can cause physical and psychological harm to others, making the ethical soundness of these processes questionable.

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