**Discuss explanations of why people conform *(12 marks)***

Deutsh and Gerard (1955) developed the dual-dependency model in order to explain why people conform. They suggested Normative Social Influence (NSI) as an explanation of compliance and Informational Social Influence (ISI) as an explanation of internalisation.

NSI is used to explain why people show **compliance** (when people change their behaviour but not their views in order to fit in with a group, e.g. laughing at a joke they don’t find funny). NSI is when people act on the **desire to be liked**, when they adapt to a group position/view because they want the others in the group to like them, this is usually when the situation they’re in is **unambiguous**. Individuals, according to NSI, look to the **group for acceptance**. NSI identifies that an individual just changes their behaviour without privately accepting what they are doing and involves public compliance and ‘going along’ with a group.

There is research to support the NSI explanation of conformity. For example, in **Asch’s** research in 1951 it is demonstrated that individuals with conform to the group on an unambiguous line judgement task in order to be liked and avoid standing out. This shows that NSI can provide an explanation of why people adhere to social norms to avoid exclusion. This is a strength because it shows that NSI is a valid assumption and that people can conform out of a desire to be liked by a group.

However, there is research to negatively criticise the NSI explanation of conformity. For example **Roher’s** research in 1954 demonstrates that conformity to a group can outlast the existence of the group. This means that on some occasions individuals will internalise the group position/view and that conformity does not just occur out of the desire for acceptance or to be liked. This is a weakness because it highlights that there might be other factors, than a desire for acceptance from a group that can impact on an individual’s decision to conform.

ISI is used to explain why people **internalise** the views of others (when they change their behaviour and views in response to group pressure, e.g. becoming a vegetarian after a talk from animal rights protesters). ISI is when people act on the **desire to be right**, typically in an **ambiguous situation** when an individual is unsure as to how to act they will look to a group, who they consider to be better informed than themselves, **for guidance and information**. ISI identifies that an individual changes both their behaviour and views according to the group position and that this change will have lasting effect as the individual has ‘internalised’ the group opinion and is likely to apply it in future.

There is evidence to support the ISI explanation of conformity. For example, **Sherif’s** research in 1936 found that individuals altered their estimates on the distance travelled by the light and moved them closer to the group position. This shows that when an individual is in a situation where they are uncertain of how to behave they take on the views of the group. This a strength because it supports the idea of ISI in explaining conformity, whereby people will be heavily influenced by those they consider to hold more knowledge than themselves.

However, there is criticism in the form of questioning whether Sherif’s research was a true investigation into conformity. **Cardwell et al** (1996) suggested that Sherif’s research was merely demonstrating the emergence of group norms rather than of conformity as there was a lack of an influential majority in his research. This means that Sherif’s study may not be investigating internalisation. This is a weakness because if Sherif’s study does not demonstrate internalisation it cannot be used to support the idea of ISI.