1.7 Conformity: types, explanations, Asch's research and Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment: Test Pack

AQA 7182 · about 25 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions.

1 Asch's study produced findings about both the overall level of conformity and how it varied between individuals.

(a) Outline the overall level of conformity found on the critical trials. **(2)**

(b) Outline what Asch's study showed about individual differences in conformity. **(2)**

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

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2 Informational social influence (ISI) and normative social influence (NSI) are two explanations for why people conform.

(a) Outline informational social influence (ISI) as an explanation for conformity. **(3)**

(b) Outline normative social influence (NSI) as an explanation for conformity. **(3)**

(c) A student revising in a library notices that everyone else in the room has put their phone on silent. Without being asked, and without knowing whether there is an official rule, the student puts their own phone on silent too. Identify which explanation, ISI or NSI, best accounts for the student's behaviour, and justify your answer. **(2)**

(Total for Question 2 is 8 marks)

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3 Asch's research has been evaluated in terms of its sample, its temporal validity and its ecological validity.

(a) Outline one limitation of Asch's original sample, and explain why this affects the conclusions that can be drawn from the study. **(3)**

(b) Perrin and Spencer (1980) repeated Asch's line-judgment procedure with British engineering students and found much lower conformity than Asch's original study. Explain what this suggests about Asch's findings. **(3)**

(c) Outline one limitation of Asch's line-judgment task in terms of its ecological validity. **(3)**

(Total for Question 3 is 9 marks)

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Mark scheme · 1.7 Conformity: types, explanations, Asch's research and Zimbardo's Stanford Prison Experiment: Test Pack

Question 1

(a) participants conformed to the incorrect majority on a substantial minority of the critical trials, on average around one third of critical trials oe **B1**

(a) this was much higher than the error rate found in a control condition with no confederates, showing genuine conformity had occurred oe **B1**

(a) Answer: Participants conformed on around a third of the critical trials on average, far more than in a no-confederate control condition.

(b) the majority of participants conformed to the incorrect majority on at least one critical trial oe **B1**

(b) a substantial minority of participants never conformed on any critical trial oe **B1**

(b) Answer: Most participants conformed at least once, but a substantial minority never conformed at all.

Question 2

(a) ISI is a cognitive explanation: a person conforms because they look to others for guidance in an ambiguous or unfamiliar situation, believing the others have more accurate knowledge oe **M1**

(a) the person accepts this information as correct and adopts it as their own view, so ISI can lead to internalisation oe **A1**

(a) more likely when a situation is ambiguous or the person is unsure of the correct answer, e.g. a novel or difficult task oe **A1**

(a) Answer: Conforming because we believe others have more accurate knowledge, especially in ambiguous situations, leading to genuine (internalised) belief change.

(b) NSI is an emotional/normative explanation: a person conforms to be accepted or liked, or to avoid social disapproval/rejection by the group oe **M1**

(b) the person's private opinion is not necessarily changed, so NSI often leads to compliance rather than internalisation oe **A1**

(b) more likely with strangers, a group the person wants to belong to, or in stressful surroundings oe **A1**

(b) Answer: Conforming to be liked/accepted and avoid rejection, usually without genuinely changing one's private view (compliance).

(c) identifies informational social influence (ISI) oe **B1**

(c) justifies with reference to the ambiguity of the situation: the student is unsure of the correct/expected behaviour (no explicit rule known) and uses others' behaviour as a guide to what is correct oe **B1**

(c) Answer: ISI - the student is unsure of the correct behaviour and uses the group as a guide in an ambiguous situation.

Question 3

(a) the sample consisted only of American men tested in the 1950s, a biased/unrepresentative sample oe **M1**

(a) this means the findings may not generalise to women, other cultures, or other time periods oe **A1**

(a) e.g. research in other contexts suggests conformity rates can differ between individualist and collectivist cultures oe **A1**

(a) Answer: The all-male, American, 1950s sample limits generalisability to other genders, cultures and eras.

(b) Perrin and Spencer (1980) found substantially lower conformity rates than Asch's original study, using a similar procedure oe **M1**

(b) this suggests Asch's findings may reflect the particular historical and cultural context of 1950s America rather than a universal feature of human behaviour oe **A1**

(b) this challenges the temporal validity/generalisability of Asch's conclusions to other eras oe **A1**

(b) Answer: The lower conformity found by Perrin and Spencer (1980) suggests Asch's results may be specific to 1950s American culture rather than universal.

(c) judging line lengths is a trivial, artificial task with no real consequences for being wrong, unlike many real-life conformity situations oe **M1**

(c) participants may have had little reason to resist conforming, so the conformity levels found may not reflect conformity in more important, real-world situations oe **A1**

(c) this means the findings may lack ecological validity and may not generalise well beyond the laboratory oe **A1**

(c) Answer: The trivial, low-stakes line-judgment task may not reflect real-world conformity, limiting ecological validity.

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