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Social psychology: social influences

ASSESSMENT CHECK 1:

1.1–1.4 Social influences – Types of conformity & Explanations for conformity & Variables affecting conformity & Conformity to social roles (page 16)

- 1 Compliance = C
Internalisation = B
Identification = D
- 2 Identification is a type of conformity that involves public and private acceptance of majority influence, because membership of that group offers something desirable for an individual. For example, being a soldier in the army involves adopting the behaviour and beliefs of fellow soldiers, such as wearing a uniform, but on leaving the army new behaviours and beliefs are adopted.
- 3 There are 6 marks available here for outlining explanations of conformity and 10 marks available for the evaluation of them. About 20 minutes should be spent constructing the answer, of which about 7½ minutes should be spent on the outline and 12½ minutes on the evaluation. For the average student this equates to about 150 to 185 words for the outlining and 250 to 310 words for the evaluation.

Probably the best way to construct an answer would be firstly to outline an explanation and provide an evaluation of it, then to repeat the process for at least one other explanation. If more than two explanations were provided, less depth (detail) would be expected in the answer.

The outline could be constructed by describing both the normative and informational social influence in terms of why each sees conformity as occurring. A third possible explanation would be that of cognitive dissonance. Marks awarded would depend on the accuracy, relevance and clarity of the descriptions and the degree of elaboration (detail), for example by detailing the types of conformity that the explanations relate to.

The evaluation would probably centre on the degree of research support for the explanations. Asch's (1955) study would provide a good source of evaluative content for normative social influence. Jenness' (1932) study would provide similar for informational social influence, as would Bogdonoff *et al.*'s. (1961) study into stress levels associated with conformity for cognitive dissonance.

Additional evaluation based on practical applications could focus on the use of the explanations in forming cohesive groups.

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Evaluative material focused on methodological and ethical criticisms, such as the elements of deceit and harm in Asch's study, would be relevant only if focused on the validity of the explanations.

Remember that the most effective evaluation is created from a number of evaluative points being woven together to form a sophisticated commentary, rather than being a series of unconnected evaluative points.

- 4 There are 6 marks available here for outlining conformity to social roles and 6 marks available for the evaluation. About 15 minutes should be spent constructing the answer, of which about 7½ minutes should be spent on the outline and 7½ minutes on the evaluation. For the average student this equates to about 150 to 185 words for the outlining and similar for the evaluation.

Possibly the best way to construct an answer would be to give a description of conformity to social roles and then to provide an evaluation.

The outline could be constructed by describing how social roles relate to social norms, the involvement of identification to such roles and how social roles permit understanding and prediction of social behaviour to bring a sense of order to social interactions.

The evaluation would probably mainly be centred on what Zimbardo's (1973) prison simulation study found about conformity to social roles, though care should be taken to exclude other elements of the study that don't relate to conformity to social roles, such as those relating more to elements of obedience.

Evaluative material focused on methodological criticisms, such as the lack of ecological validity (as the conditions experienced didn't fully represent those of a real prison), would be relevant only if focused on the validity of the study in relation to the role of social roles in conformity.

Remember that the most effective evaluation is created from a number of evaluative points being woven together to form a sophisticated commentary, rather than being a series of unconnected evaluative points.

- 5
- a) The aim of Zimbardo's (1973) study was to test whether prison violence was due to disposition, such as the brutal personalities of prisoners and guards, or situational factors, such as aspects of the prison environment. It was found that deindividuation occurred, with both guards and the prisoners themselves referring to prisoners by their numbers rather than their names.
 - b) One ethical issue is that the participants were subjected to harm. Four prisoners had to be released early, as they exhibited severe emotional reactions, such as crying and rage.

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- 6 One strength of the participant observation study method is that observers have access to much more material than researchers who make observations from outside a situation. In Zimbardo's study, the experimenter took part as the prison superintendent, and thus was able to see up close the reactions of the participants. One weakness of this type of study is reactivity, where the participant observers become involved in the participants' behaviour and thus may skew (affect) the findings.
- 7 a) Normative social influence is shown in the passage.
b) Pritti buys and wears a replica football shirt, even though she has little knowledge of or interest in football, in order to be accepted by the other students and not excluded from their activities.
- 8 The experimental method involves the manipulation of an independent variable in order to see its effect upon a dependent variable, while other variables are controlled (kept constant), with participants being randomly allocated to testing conditions. This method allows replication in order to assess the validity of findings, and allows causality to be established (cause and effect relationships).

ASSESSMENT CHECK 2:

1.5–1.7 Social influences – Obedience and the work of Milgram & Explanations for obedience & Situational variables affecting obedience (page 32)

- 1
 - (i) The degree to which individuals are seen as justified in having power over others. = E
 - (ii) An individual with a belief in absolute obedience, submission to authority and domination of minorities. = C
 - (iii) Acting as a representative of another person who is therefore seen as responsible for the behaviour demonstrated. = A
 - (iv) Features of an environment that can affect individuals' level of compliance to authority figures. = B

- 2 'Discuss' means to outline and evaluate, in this instance two explanations for obedience. There are 6 marks available here for outlining two explanations for obedience and 10 marks available for the evaluation of them. About 20 minutes should be spent constructing the answer, of which about 7½ minutes should be spent outlining the two explanations and 12½ minutes on the evaluation. For the average student this equates to about 150 to 185 words for the outlining and 250 to 310 words for the evaluation.

Possibly the best way to construct this essay would be to outline one explanation and then evaluate it, and then to outline the second explanation and evaluate that.

Relevant explanations could include the agentic state, where individuals see themselves as agents of authority figures and therefore not responsible for their actions; legitimacy of authority, which involves the degree to which individuals are seen as justified in ordering others to obey; situational variables, such as proximity, location and the wearing of uniforms; as well as the dispositional explanation of the authoritarian personality, which sees individuals with certain personality characteristics as being more obedient to authority. Marks awarded would depend on the accuracy, relevance and clarity of the descriptions and the degree of elaboration (detail).

The evaluation would probably centre on the degree of research support for the explanations, with Milgram's initial study and his later variations being a good source of evidence. For the authoritarian personality, research by Zillmer *et al.* (1995) and Elms & Milgram (1966) would be relevant.

Other sources of evaluation could centre on the internal and external validity of studies, so long as these were focused on assessing the validity of the explanations.

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It would be difficult to construct evaluation based on ethical issues that would address the question.

Practical applications drawn from the explanations, such as strategies to resist social influence, could also be useful, as valid explanations should give rise to effective applications.

The most effective evaluation is created from a number of evaluative points being woven together to form a sophisticated commentary, rather than being a series of unconnected evaluative points.

- 3 There are 6 marks available here for outlining situational variables affecting obedience and 6 marks available for the evaluation of them. About 15 minutes should be spent constructing the answer, of which about 7½ minutes should be spent outlining two or more variables and 7½ minutes on the evaluation. For the average student this equates to about 150 to 185 words for the outlining and similar for the evaluation.

There are two broad ways to construct the answer: either to outline situational variables collectively and then evaluate them; or to outline one situational variable and then evaluate it, and repeat with one or more other situational variables.

Relevant situational variables could include proximity (how aware individuals are of the consequences of their actions when obeying authority figures), location (the degree to which a location contributes to the legitimacy of authority) and uniforms (the degree to which the wearing of uniforms contributes to the legitimacy of authority). At least two should be outlined to meet the requirements of the question. Marks awarded would depend on the accuracy, relevance and clarity of the descriptions and the degree of elaboration (detail).

The evaluation would probably centre on the degree of research support for the variables, with Milgram's variations providing a rich source of evidence. Bickman's (1974) study would also be useful for evaluating the role of uniforms in obedience.

Methodological criticisms, such as those commenting on the internal and external validity of research, would be relevant only if focused on the validity of situational variables.

Practical applications drawn from the explanations – such as strategies to resist social influence – could also be useful, as valid explanations should give rise to effective applications.

It would be difficult to construct evaluation based on ethical issues that would address the question.

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The most effective evaluation is created from a number of evaluative points being woven together to form a sophisticated commentary, rather than being a series of unconnected evaluative points.

- 4 Milgram (1963) found that 100 per cent of participants pressed buttons on a shock machine to give what they believed to be genuine shocks of at least 300 volts to a confederate learner, with 62.5 per cent of participants going up to the maximum voltage of 450 volts, which was given three times. It was concluded that people will obey orders that have negative consequences if the orders are given by a perceived legitimate authority figure. It was argued by some that the findings lacked internal validity as the participants knew the shocks were fake. This doesn't stand up to scrutiny, though, as participants themselves received a genuine 45 volt shock before the study began; also, three participants had seizures and others suffered varying degrees of emotional upset performing the procedure. Only 20 per cent reported any doubts about the shocks being real.
- 5 When proximity – the physical distance between someone obeying an order and being aware of the consequences of doing so – becomes closer, participants are less able to divorce themselves from the consequences of their behaviour, and thus obedience rates are lower.

Location can affect the perception of legitimate authority. When Milgram's study was repeated in a run-down office block, obedience dropped from 62.5 per cent to 40 per cent, as this variation had less legitimate authority than when he performed it at Yale University, a prestigious 'Ivy League' institution.

- 6 Yolanda obeyed the security guard as his uniform gave the impression of him having high legitimate authority to issue orders that should be obeyed. The fellow shopper wasn't wearing a uniform so had less legitimate authority. This was similar to the findings of Bickman's (1974) study where more participants obeyed a security guard than someone dressed in casual clothes when they ordered a passerby to pick up litter they hadn't dropped.
- 7
 - (i) 24 people obeyed the order (3 + 5 + 16), divided by 3 (3 conditions) = 8
 - (ii) A bar chart would be appropriate as the data is not continuous, the conditions being separate from each other.
 - (iii) An advantage of an independent groups design is that each participant performs only one condition of a study, so there is less chance of demand characteristics, where participants form an opinion of the hypothesis and act as they believe the researcher wants them to.

A disadvantage of an independent groups design is that each participant produces only one piece of data, so twice as many participants are required than in a repeated measures design where each participant produces two or more pieces of data.

ASSESSMENT CHECK 3:

1.8 Social influences – Explanations of resistance to social influence (page 40)

- 1 Social support = D
Resistance = C
Locus of control = B
- 2 There are 6 marks available here for outlining two explanations for resistance to social influence and 10 marks available for the evaluation of them. About 20 minutes should be spent constructing the answer, of which about 7½ minutes should be spent on the outlining and 12½ minutes on the evaluation. For the average student this equates to about 150 to 185 words for the outlining and 250 to 310 words for the evaluation.

Possibly the best way to construct this essay would be to outline explanation 1 and then evaluate it, and then outline explanation 2 and evaluate that.

Relevant explanations could include social support, involving how the perception of assistance and solidarity from others affects conformity and obedience levels, and locus of control, concerning how the extent to which individuals believe they are in control of events in their lives affects conformity and obedience levels. Other relevant explanations could include systematic processing, morality and personality, as well as reactance, ironic deviance and status. Marks awarded would depend on the accuracy, relevance and clarity of the descriptions and the degree of elaboration (detail).

The evaluation would probably centre on the degree of research support for the explanations, with Asch's variations concerning the effect of a dissenter on conformity levels being a good source of evidence for social support, along with Allen & Levine (1971) and Milgram's (1974) variation of his study, where confederate teachers refused to give shocks, which drastically lowered the obedience rate. For locus of control, research that assesses the relationship between a high internal locus of control and conformity and obedience would be relevant, such as Spector (1983) and Holland (1967).

Other evaluative material could focus on practical applications drawn from the explanations, such as strategies to resist social influence, as valid explanations should give rise to effective applications.

Evaluative material focused on methodological criticisms and ethical issues would be relevant only if focused on the validity of the explanations being discussed, something that might be difficult to achieve in an effective manner. However, a

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consideration of what the explanations can contribute to the free will versus determinism debate could more easily be made relevant.

The most effective evaluation is created from a number of evaluative points being woven together to form a sophisticated commentary, rather than being a series of unconnected evaluative points.

- 3 'Discuss' means to outline and evaluate, in this instance social support as an explanation of resistance to social influence. There are 6 marks available here for outlining the explanation and 6 marks available for the evaluation of it. About 15 minutes should be spent constructing the answer, of which about 7½ minutes should be spent on the outline and 7½ minutes on the evaluation. For the average student this equates to about 150 to 185 words for the outlining and similar for the evaluation.

The easiest way to construct the answer would probably be firstly to outline the role of social support and then to evaluate it.

The description of the explanation would probably focus on how social support affects conformity and obedience rates, especially the effect that dissenters have on an individual's behaviour and thinking. Marks awarded would depend on the accuracy, relevance and clarity of the descriptions and the degree of elaboration (detail).

The evaluation would probably centre on what research has found about the effect of social support on conformity and obedience levels. Asch's variations concerning the effect of a dissenter on conformity levels is a good source of evidence for social support, along with Allen & Levine's (1971) study concerning the effect of dissenters with poor eyesight and Milgram's (1974) variation of his study, in which confederate teachers refused to give shocks which had the effect of drastically lowering obedience rates.

Other evaluative material could focus on practical applications drawn from the explanation, such as how emphasising dissenters as desirable models of behaviour could be used as a strategy to encourage resistance.

Evaluative material focused on methodological criticisms and ethical issues would be relevant only if focused on the validity of the explanations being discussed, something that might be difficult to achieve in an effective manner.

The most effective evaluation is created from a number of evaluative points being woven together to form a sophisticated commentary, rather than being a series of unconnected evaluative points.

- 4 Locus of control concerns the extent to which an individual believes they can control events in their life. People who have a high internal locus of control believe they can

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influence the outcome of situations and so they are able to resist social influence more, as they see themselves as having a free choice as whether to conform or obey. Those with a high external locus of control, however, are less able to resist social influence, as they believe things occur due to fate rather than their own efforts.

- 5 On the first day the hat-wearers on the bus showed unanimity (agreement) in taking off their hats, thus creating a strong social influence for Jasper to do so too. On the following day, however, when one hat-wearer showed dissent in not taking off his hat, this lowered the unanimity of the group, giving social support to Jasper to not conform and also keep his hat on.

- 6 (i) The correlational study method measures the strength and direction of co-variables, for example the degree to which an individual has an internal locus of control and the degree to which they conform in social situations. Correlations can be positive, where both co-variables increase together or decrease together, or negative, where one co-variable increases and one co-variable decreases.

- (ii) One strength of the correlational study method is that no manipulation of variables is required. Instead, naturally occurring co-variables are used, meaning correlations can often be used when the manipulation of variables would be unethical.

One weakness of the correlational study method is that causality (cause and effect relationships) cannot be shown, as such studies are not conducted under controlled conditions. Another, non-measured factor may be having an influence.

- (iii) This needs a vertical axis labelled 'Level of internal locus of control' with a horizontal axis labelled 'Degree of resistance to social influence'. The scattergram should show a straight line drawn from the bottom left of the graph to the top right of the graph.

ASSESSMENT CHECK 4:

1.9–1.10 Social influences – Minority influence & The role of social influence processes in social change (page 48)

- 1
 - (i) Minorities who demonstrate an ability to be moderate, co-operative and reasonable. = A
 - (ii) Minorities who demonstrate resistance of social pressures and abuses against their viewpoint. = D
 - (iii) Minorities who are unchanging in their opinions and behaviour. = C
- 2 'Discuss' means to outline and evaluate, in this instance the role of social influence processes in social change. There are 6 marks available here for the outline and 10 marks available for the evaluation. About 20 minutes should be spent constructing the answer, of which about 7½ minutes should be spent on the outline and 12½ minutes on the evaluation. For the average student this equates to about 150 to 185 words for the outlining and 250 to 310 words for the evaluation.

Possibly the best way to construct this essay would be firstly to outline the role of social influence processes and then to evaluate them.

Relevant description could focus on social change as a process by which society changes its beliefs, attitudes and behaviour to create new social norms. Also, the role that minority influence plays in this process to stimulate innovation through altering people's belief systems, as well as the role of majority influence and obedience in the maintenance of newly created social norms.

The evaluation would probably centre on what research has suggested about the role of social influence processes in social change. Martin *et al.*'s (2007) study into resistance to persuasive messages as a function of minority and majority status could provide key evidence. So too could reference to Martin & Hewstone's (1999) study into minority influence and creative judgements, Burgoon's (1995) study into the effect of violation of social norms by minorities and Nemeth's (2009) study into the effect of dissent by minorities.

Other evaluative material could focus on practical applications, such as the use of minority influence to create innovation in the workplace. A consideration of how social change processes reflect on the free will versus determinism debate could also easily be made relevant.

Evaluative material focused on methodological criticisms and ethical issues would be relevant only if focused on the role of social influence processes in social change.

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Remember that the most effective evaluation is created from a number of evaluative points being woven together to form a sophisticated commentary, rather than being a series of unconnected evaluative points.

- 3 There are 6 marks available here for outlining minority influence and 6 marks available for the evaluation of it. About 15 minutes should be spent constructing the answer, of which about 7½ minutes should be spent on the outline and 7½ minutes on the evaluation. For the average student this equates to about 150 to 185 words for the outlining and similar for the evaluation.

One way to construct an answer would be firstly to outline minority influence and then to evaluate it, while another way would be to outline an element of minority influence (such as commitment) and then evaluate it, and then to repeat the process for other elements.

The outline could focus on minority influence itself as a type of social influence, with special focus on conversion and social cryptoamnesia (where initial conversion is slow, but gains pace over time), as well as the importance of factors such as the behavioural styles of consistency, commitment and flexibility.

The evaluation would probably centre on research findings into minority influence, such as Moscovici's (1969) study into the effects of a consistent minority, as well as Nemeth's (1986) and Mugny & Papastamou's (1982) studies into the effects of flexible minorities.

Other evaluative material could focus on practical applications, such as the use of minority influence to create innovation in the workplace.

Evaluative material focused on methodological criticisms (such as Moscovici only using females) and ethical issues (such as that of deception) would be relevant only if focused on minority influence.

Remember that the most effective evaluation is created from a number of evaluative points being woven together to form a sophisticated commentary, rather than being a series of unconnected evaluative points.

- 4
- (i) Consistent minority influence is unchanging and thus persuasive, because such a minority shows confidence in its beliefs.
 - (ii) Minorities that are flexible show they are willing to compromise and are thus persuasive as they show they can be moderate, co-operative and reasonable.
 - (iii) Minorities that resist social pressures, ridicule and abuse are showing commitment to their viewpoint and are thus persuasive in getting people to re-examine their own beliefs and behaviour.

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- 5 Ise and her partner showed commitment, consistency and flexibility in their views about high-visibility clothing and were thus persuasive in changing people's opinions. Commitment was shown by sticking to their views even though they were initially ridiculed. Consistency was shown as they continued to argue for the importance of children wearing high-visibility clothing to school. Flexibility was shown as they compromised by getting their own children to just wear fluorescent jackets.
- 6 One ethical issue that needs to be considered is deceit. Participants should not be misled in any way about an investigation. Moscovici (1969) deceived his participants into thinking everyone in the study was a genuine participant, when in fact some were confederates pretending to be participants.

A second ethical issue is that researchers should get informed consent from their participants by fully informing them of the aims and procedures of the study so that a considered decision can be made as to whether or not to participate. As Moscovici deceived his participants, informed consent could not be gained.

A third ethical issue is that participants should not experience harm. It is arguable that in Moscovici's study mild stress was experienced in being pressured to conform to a viewpoint that participants believed to be false.