

## Psychology exam paper questions

1a. Explain the terms Social influence and majority influence? 3+3 marks

Social influence means the influence of a group (majority influence) or individual (minority influence) to modify thinking, attitudes, and/or behaviour of others, example fashion trends are consequences of majority influence, while political and religious leaders are example of minority influence, while the authority figure is an example of obedience. Majority influence, this occurs when people adopt behaviour, attitudes, or values of the majority (dominant or largest groups) after being exposed to their values or behaviour. In this sense they publicly yield to group pressure, although in some cases they yield privately. The majority is able to influence because of other people's desire to be accepted on their desire to be right. There are two types of majority influence, normative and informational, normative meaning, where an individual wants to fit in with the majority members of the group, while informative means where we look to others for the right answer or for appropriate behaviour.

1b. Describe the aims and procedures of one study of conformity. (3+3 marks)

Asch study's: the aim was to determine whether a majority can influence the minority even when the situation is unambiguous. Asch aimed to find out if the effects of majority influence that had previously been found in situations in which the stimulus was ambiguous are so great that they are still present when it is apparently obvious that the majority have responded incorrectly.

The procedures were he set up a situation, in which 7 people participated. They all said out 3 lines and which was the same length line X. All but 1 participant were confederates of the experimenter; they were at some point, to give a wrong answer, and the participant had to offer his/her opinion in trial. He checked the performance with group pressure while the other experiment was under control conditions.

1c. To what extent has research supported the view that the majority exerts a significant degree of influence over the individual? (18 marks -6AO1 for description/information plus 12 AO2 for evaluation)

Asch someone who wanted to know if the majority would have an influence over the individuals, his aim was to see how people would react when given an unambiguous task, would they be influenced by the behaviour of others or would stick firmly with what they knew what was right or not. Other researchers were Jeanness, who did an experiment with beans, and to make people estimate how many beans there were, this was an ambiguous situation because the only way of doing it, was by asking others to get some idea about a reasonable answer. Another was Sherif, he investigated responses to an ambiguous stimulus, using the autokinetic effect. Sherif asked how far the light had moved in the dark, however they started

asking each other, to give a reasonable answer, when Sherif asked for individual answers, and they were all similar.

However, there were problems like for example: gender differences; Eagly and Carli explain this by saying that women are more conformist than men, because women are more concerned with social relationships than men. This study is criticised furthermore, because of cultural factors, the individualist cultures such as the UK and US, conformity appears to be higher in societies where group harmony is a priority. This is what Smith and Bond found in a review of 31 studies of conformity. Conformity may be seen as a positive feature in cultures where interdependence is more highly valued than independence.

Asch, however, measured this by the size of the majority; they were 123 male undergraduates, who were tested with a series of lines. All but one of the participants were confederates, which makes the minority go with them, they did this because of their distortion of action and others, that they didn't want to be ridiculed in front of the group, so they went along with the group. When Asch, let the participant, do the answers, they were confidential, which made them give a different answer and the right one.