

4.3 Psychology of Social Situations

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 18 marks**

KEY WORDS social facilitation 社会助长 • normative 规范性 • obedience 服从
• informational 信息性 • social loafing 社会惰化

Objective

Build the skills to answer exam questions on **conformity** 从众, **obedience** 服从 and group effects.

You must be able to:

- distinguish **normative** 规范性 from **informational** 信息性 social influence
- state the factors that raise or lower **obedience**
- describe **social facilitation** 社会助长 and **social loafing** 社会惰化
- explain **groupthink** 群体思维, **group polarisation** 群体极化 and the **bystander effect** 旁观者效应

1 Worked examples

Study these first. Each one shows the method for a task used later.

■ Two reasons to conform

Normative influence: going along to be accepted, even when you privately disagree.

Informational influence: going along because you believe the group knows better.

■ What changes obedience

Obedience rises with a legitimate and physically present authority, and with distance from the victim; it falls sharply when the authority is remote, when a peer refuses, or when the victim is close and visible.

■ Facilitation and loafing

The presence of others **improves** performance on easy, well-learned tasks and **im-pairs** it on hard ones. In a group where individual effort is not identifiable, people contribute less — **social loafing**.

■ Three group effects

Groupthink: a cohesive group suppresses dissent to preserve agreement. **Group polarisation**: discussion moves a group toward a more extreme version of its initial leaning. **Bystander effect**: the more witnesses present, the less likely any one intervenes, because responsibility is diffused.

2 Practice

2.1 State the difference between normative and informational influence. [2]

2.2 State two conditions that reduce obedience. [2]

2.3 A student performs a well-practised piece better in front of an audience but a new one worse.

(a) Name the effect. [1]

(b) State the factor that decides the direction. [1]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 Failing to help because many others are present illustrates [1]

- **A** groupthink
- **B** the bystander effect
- **C** social facilitation
- **D** normative influence

3.2 A committee that suppresses doubts to preserve agreement shows [1]

- A group polarisation
 - B groupthink
 - C social loafing
 - D informational influence
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3.3 A group project is graded only as a whole.

(a) Name the likely effect on individual effort. [1]

(b) Suggest one change to the assessment and justify it. [2]

3.4 Applied research task. In a study, a participant sits with seven others and judges which of three lines matches a standard. The others, who are confederates, all give the same clearly wrong answer. In a second study, participants are told by an experimenter in a lab coat to deliver increasing electric shocks to a learner in another room; 65% continue to the maximum level.

(a) Name the phenomenon in each study and the researcher associated with each. [4]

(b) Explain the difference between normative and informational social influence, and state which better explains the line study. [2]

(c) State **one** change that reduced obedience in the second study, and explain why. [1]

Solutions

2.1 normative: conforming to be accepted despite private disagreement; informational: conforming because the group is believed to be right.

2.2 any two of: the authority is remote rather than present; a peer refuses; the victim is close and visible; the authority lacks legitimacy.

2.3 (a) social facilitation. (b) task difficulty: easy or well-learned tasks improve, hard or new ones are impaired.

3.1 B. responsibility is diffused among the witnesses.

3.2 B. cohesion and the desire for agreement suppress dissent.

3.3 (a) social loafing. (b) assess individual contributions as well as the group product, because effort falls when individual contribution is not identifiable.

3.4 (a) **Conformity** (1), studied by **Asch** (1); **obedience** (1), studied by **Milgram** (1). (b) **Normative** influence is conforming to be accepted or to avoid standing out, and it changes public behaviour more than private belief (1); **informational** influence is conforming because others are taken to be a better source of information, and it can change private belief. Because the correct line was obvious, the line study is better explained by **normative** influence (1).

(c) Moving the experimenter out of the room and having him give instructions by telephone (or placing the learner in the same room, or removing the prestigious university setting) reduced obedience (1), because the authority figure's presence and legitimacy — and the psychological distance from the victim — are what sustain it.