20.1 Social cognition, attribution and social influence: evidence and transfer

Name: _____ Class: _____ Date: _____ **Total: 8 marks**

KEY WORDS fundamental attribution error • normative influence

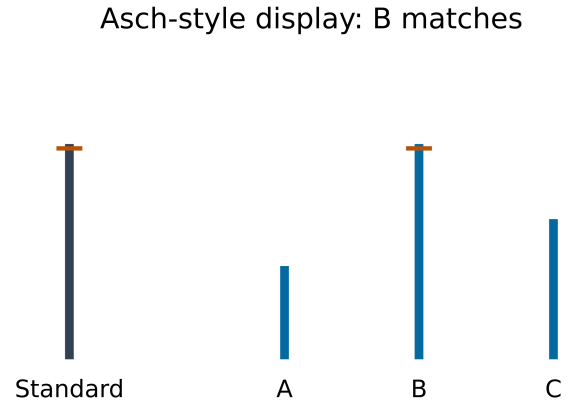
Objective

Apply attribution theory and its characteristic errors; Distinguish conformity, obedience and the two influence routes; Explain dissonance, persuasion routes and self-evaluation processes. Original practice and authored marking guidance.

1 Key knowledge and worked examples

fundamental attribution error : Over-attributing others' behaviour to disposition while neglecting the situation. **normative influence** : Conforming to gain acceptance or avoid rejection, distinct from informational influence.

Attribution distinguishes situational and dispositional explanations. Informational influence treats others as evidence; normative influence concerns acceptance. Obedience involves an authority's direction. An attitude includes evaluative components, while an action also depends on opportunity, incentives and constraints. A mechanism needs discriminating evidence: public agreement alone cannot uniquely identify private belief.



Stimulus schematic; the drawing does not measure conformity.

Worked case. A student copies a group's route choice because they believe the group knows the campus. How does this differ from copying to avoid ridicule?

Believing the group has useful knowledge fits informational influence. Avoiding ridicule fits normative influence. The same outward action can arise through different mechanisms. Anonymity, uncertainty and private accounts may help distinguish them in an ethically approved task.

2 Practice

2.1 A shopper, furious after a parking ticket, screams at a friend who tells him to calm down. Which theory best accounts for the outburst? [1]

A. excitation transfer B. social identity C. correspondent inference D. distraction-conflict E. normative focus

2.2 Conforming to a group in order to be accepted, despite private doubt, is: [1]

A. informational influence B. normative influence C. obedience D. deindividuation E. self-verification

2.3 Revisit the worked case. State one conclusion its evidence supports and one stronger conclusion it does not support. Explain the difference. [2]

3 Exam-style questions

3.1 A late student is called lazy, but the bus stopped unexpectedly. Build a better attribution and name what remains unknown. Give the interpretation, supporting reasoning, a relevant alternative or limitation, and an appropriate check. [4]