Social psychology

GRE Subject Test · GRE Psychology

Scope and prerequisites

GRE Psychology topic 3 (III). Read SO.1 and SO.2 for attribution, influence and group mechanisms. The practice tasks below are original, not official ETS questions.

Concepts and method

attribution : An explanation for behaviour. **conformity** : Changing behaviour or judgement in relation to a group.

Attribution concerns explanations for behaviour. Situational and dispositional causes should be distinguished.

Conformity concerns group pressure; obedience concerns an authority's instruction. Both require a clear social context.

Attitude and behaviour links depend on measurement and situation. A stated intention is not identical to observed action.

Group research must consider social norms, selection and ethical constraints before generalising its findings.

Separate what people do, what they privately believe and why they do it. Agreement may seek acceptance, use others as information or follow an authority. An attribution should compare situational constraints with stable personal explanations. Group differences require information about sampling, norms and opportunities; a category label does not explain every member. Use SO.1 and SO.2 for attribution and group mechanisms.

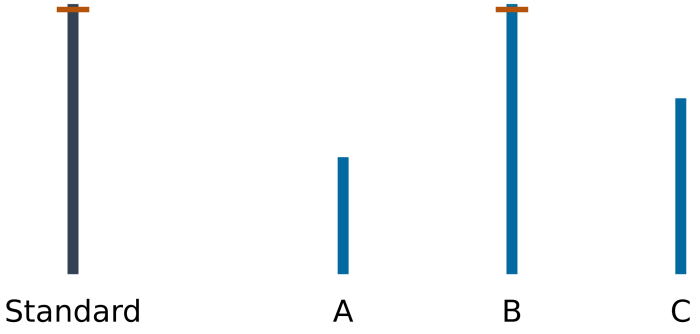
Worked reasoning

A participant agrees with a group's visibly wrong answer. If the person privately doubts it but complies to avoid rejection, normative influence is a plausible explanation. Accepting the group as a source of information is informational influence.

A pupil publicly agrees with peers but privately gives the correct answer. An adult did not issue an instruction. Which influence fits best, and what remains uncertain?

The public/private difference fits normative influence: agreement may avoid rejection while private belief stays different. It is not enough to call the response obedience because no authority instruction is described. Fear of rejection is still an inferred mechanism; an approved private account or changed anonymity condition could strengthen it.

Asch-style display: B matches



Stimulus schematic; the drawing does not measure conformity.

The correct answer is unambiguous, so any conforming errors come from social pressure

Independent transfer

A club's members help more than non-members. Explain why this does not show that joining the club causes generosity, then improve the evidence.

Attempt independently, then use the matching skill sheet solution.

Review and source limits

Avoid this error: Do not infer a person's stable trait from a single constrained action.