Pressure in Action

Read how situations and groups can shape behavior.

SS24.P.17 "Describe how attitudes, conditions of obedience and conformity, and other influences affect actions and shape human behavior, including actor-observer, self-server, social facilitation, social loafing, bystander effect, groupthink..."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three actions shaped by other people, then circle the two explanations given for Maya's trip.

What Changes What We Do?

1. At a fundraiser, Maya trips. A classmate calls her careless, but Maya blames a loose mat. This actor-observer bias favors traits when explaining others' actions and circumstances when explaining our own. Maya credits her skill for a strong speech but blames a faulty microphone for a weak one, showing self-serving bias. An audience helps her deliver a well-practiced speech, an example of social facilitation. During group cleanup, some students do less when no one tracks individual effort, an example of social loafing.

2. When a visitor collapses near a crowded entrance, each witness may wait for someone else to call for help, an example of the bystander effect. On the fundraiser committee, students privately doubt an expensive plan but agree aloud to avoid disagreement. Their desire for harmony prevents careful review, a risk of groupthink. After supporters discuss only reasons they like the plan, they favor an even more expensive version, showing group polarization. These patterns differ: bystanders delay action, groupthink discourages dissent, and polarization pushes a shared view toward an extreme.

3. In Solomon Asch's line-judgment studies, participants sometimes gave wrong answers after hearing a group give them; pressure to conform shaped their responses. In Stanley Milgram's obedience studies, many participants continued giving what they believed were painful electric shocks when an experimenter urged them on. The shocks were not real, but participants did not know that. Both studies used deception. Asch's participants faced social pressure; Milgram's could experience serious distress. The experimenter's prompts also raised questions about Milgram's participants' freedom to stop.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How do the explanations for Maya's trip and speeches show two different biases?

2. Why might an audience improve Maya's speech while a group setting reduces effort during cleanup or delays help for the visitor?

3. How do groupthink and group polarization affect the committee's decision differently?

4. How did other people influence participants in Asch's and Milgram's studies? Identify one ethical concern in each study.

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Invent a school or community situation in which a person faces pressure from both an authority figure and peers. In one paragraph, explain two possible actions using obedience, conformity, and one other influence from the passage, then state one ethical question a researcher studying the situation should consider.

Pressure in Action

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline three actions shaped by other people, then circle the two explanations given for Maya's trip. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How do the explanations for Maya's trip and speeches show two different biases?	**The classmate blames Maya's trait while Maya blames the mat, showing actor-observer bias. Maya credits success to skill but blames failure on the microphone, showing self-serving bias.**
2	Why might an audience improve Maya's speech while a group setting reduces effort during cleanup or delays help for the visitor?	**An audience can improve a practiced performance through social facilitation. Untracked individual effort can lead to social loafing, while witnesses may each expect someone else to help, the bystander effect.**
3	How do groupthink and group polarization affect the committee's decision differently?	**Groupthink keeps doubters from speaking up or carefully reviewing the plan. Group polarization moves supporters toward an even more expensive plan.**
4	How did other people influence participants in Asch's and Milgram's studies? Identify one ethical concern in each study.	**Asch's participants faced pressure to match the group; deception and social pressure were ethical concerns. Milgram's participants faced an experimenter's instructions; deception, distress, and questions about freedom to stop were concerns.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At a community garden, a supervisor tells volunteers to skip a safety check, while the other volunteers say skipping it is normal. Leo might obey the supervisor because the instruction comes from an authority figure. He might also conform to his peers to avoid standing apart. If everyone stays quiet because they fear upsetting the group, groupthink could prevent a discussion of the risks. Leo could instead ask for the check and invite others to speak. A researcher studying the volunteers should ask: Can they leave the study without penalty?

Accept accurate explanations in students' own words. For Part 3, look for distinct uses of obedience and conformity, one additional influence from the passage, two possible actions, and a relevant research ethics question.