Pressure and Choice

How three studies shaped ideas about social influence

P.7.3 "Analyze the studies that lead to current understandings of conformity, obedience, nonconformity, and compliance, including Asch, Milgram, and Zimbardo."

NAME _____ DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK

Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline the source of pressure in each study, circle a response to that pressure, and write an L beside one limit on what a study can prove.

What Makes People Go Along?

1. Imagine a room where everyone else says two unequal lines match. In Solomon Asch's 1950s studies, volunteers judged which comparison line matched a target line. Other people in the room were working with the researcher and deliberately gave the same wrong answer on certain trials. Many volunteers agreed with the group at least once, even though the correct answer was visible. This was conformity, changing a public judgment to fit a group, not necessarily changing a private belief. When one other person broke the group's agreement, conformity dropped. The studies show how a unanimous group can shape what people say.

2. In Stanley Milgram's early 1960s studies, volunteers acting as teachers were told by an experimenter to give increasing electric shocks to a learner after errors. The learner was an actor, and no shocks were delivered to that actor. At the start, the volunteers received a real sample shock themselves, making the setup seem convincing. Many continued after hearing the actor protest; in one original condition, 65 percent reached the highest labeled setting. This illustrated obedience to an authority's directions, not simply agreement with peers. The study cannot show that people would act the same way in every setting, and its deception raised ethical concerns.

3. In 1971, Philip Zimbardo and colleagues assigned college men to guard and prisoner roles in a simulated prison. Some guards acted harshly, and some prisoners showed distress; researchers stopped the planned two-week study after six days. Yet researchers helped shape the situation, and critics argue that their instructions to guards limit claims that roles alone caused the behavior. Across these studies, nonconformity means resisting a group's pressure, while compliance means agreeing to a direct request, even without a change in private belief. Obedience is narrower: following an authority's order. Ask who applies pressure before deciding which idea best explains a person's action.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE

Use the passage

1. How did Asch's results show both the power of group pressure and a way to resist it?

2. Why might Milgram's sample shock have made the procedure convincing, and what made the volunteers' later actions an example of obedience?

3. What did the simulated prison study show, and why can it not prove that assigned roles alone caused the behavior?

4. How does the passage distinguish compliance from obedience? Why do Milgram's experimenter's directions fit obedience?

3 YOUR TURN

Your own words

Create a fictional school situation involving a group and a person in charge. In 5 to 6 sentences, describe one act of conformity, one of nonconformity, and one of obedience or compliance, then connect one act to a study in the passage and name a limit on what that study proves.

Pressure and Choice

PART 1 · READ AND MARK

Underline the source of pressure in each study, circle a response to that pressure, and write an L beside one limit on what a study can prove. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 · ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did Asch's results show both the power of group pressure and a way to resist it?	**Many volunteers gave the group's wrong answer at least once, but conformity dropped when one person broke the group's agreement.**
2	Why might Milgram's sample shock have made the procedure convincing, and what made the volunteers' later actions an example of obedience?	**The real sample shock could make the setup seem credible. Volunteers then followed an experimenter's directions to give supposed shocks, even after hearing protests. No shocks reached the actor.**
3	What did the simulated prison study show, and why can it not prove that assigned roles alone caused the behavior?	**Some guards acted harshly and some prisoners showed distress. Researchers helped shape the situation, including through instructions to guards, so roles alone cannot be identified as the cause.**
4	How does the passage distinguish compliance from obedience? Why do Milgram's experimenter's directions fit obedience?	**Compliance is agreeing to a direct request; obedience is following an authority's order. The experimenter directed the volunteers from a position of authority.**

PART 3 · YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

At a club meeting, most members vote for a later start time. Nia agrees aloud because she wants to fit in, even though she prefers the earlier time. Luis votes for the earlier time despite the group. The club adviser then tells Luis to put away the ballots, and he obeys because she is in charge. Luis's action resembles obedience in Milgram's study because an authority gave a direction. Milgram's staged setting cannot prove that everyone would obey an authority in every situation.

Accept other plausible school situations if the responses match the identified types of social influence. The study connection must use a finding or procedure from the passage, and the limit must not claim more than the study can show.