

## **2008 AP® PSYCHOLOGY FREE-RESPONSE QUESTIONS**

### **Abstract**

2. We conducted a variation of Asch's (1951) conformity study in which participants made judgments about the length of lines. We randomly assigned participants to one of two conditions and told them that the study involved perceptual abilities. In the first condition, participants estimated the length of lines after hearing five people pretending to be participants (confederates) give inaccurate estimates. In the second condition, participants estimated the length of lines without hearing estimates of confederates. As we expected, participants in the first condition were less accurate in their estimates of line length, demonstrating the tendency to conform to majority influence.

A) How would each element below be related to the specific content of the experiment reported in the abstract?

- Control group
- Deception
- Operational definition of the dependent variable
- Hypothesis
- Debriefing

B) How might participants' estimates of line length in the study be related to the following?

- Cognitive dissonance
- Maslow's hierarchy of needs

**STOP**

**END OF EXAM**

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### **Question 2**

#### **Abstract**

We conducted a variation of Asch's (1951) conformity study in which participants made judgments about the length of lines. We randomly assigned participants to one of two conditions and told them that the study involved perceptual abilities. In the first condition, participants estimated the length of lines after hearing five people pretending to be participants (confederates) give inaccurate estimates. In the second condition, participants estimated the length of lines without hearing estimates of confederates. As we expected, participants in the first condition were less accurate in their estimates of line length, demonstrating the tendency to conform to majority influence.

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- Cognitive dissonance
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### **Scoring Criteria**

#### General Considerations

1. Answers must be presented in sentences, and sentences must be cogent enough for the student's meaning to be apparent. Spelling and grammatical mistakes do not reduce a student's score, but spelling must be close enough so that the reader is convinced of the word intended.
2. Within a point, students are not penalized for misinformation unless it *directly contradicts* correct information that would otherwise have scored a point.
3. Students can only score points if information is presented in *context*. This means that they must clearly convey which part of the question is being answered before a point may be scored. For example, if a student correctly explains that participants should be informed afterward that the experiment was really about conformity but does not identify this as debriefing, the point is not earned. In some cases, it is possible to infer context from the structure of the essay.
4. Throughout the essay, definitions alone are not sufficient to score points. Every point requires students to relate their answers to information in the abstract.

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**Question 2 (continued)**

**Part A: Research Elements (Points 1–5)**

To score any point in part A, students must *relate their answers to specific content from the experiment.*

**Point 1: Control group**

To score this point, students must establish that the control group

- a. consists of participants who did not hear inaccurate estimates or
- b. is the second condition (accept “group B”) or
- c. is the group without confederates

**Point 2: Deception**

To score this point, students must establish that deception occurs

- a. because the participants were not told the experiment was about conformity or
- b. because the participants were told the experiment was about perceptual abilities (or line length) or
- c. when inaccurate information is given about the length of the lines or
- d. because of the use of confederates

*Note*

Do not score: Statements such as “The experimenter lied,” because there is no specific information from the experiment.

**Point 3: Operational definition of the dependent variable**

To score this point, students must describe a measurement of line length (accuracy) or how many participants agreed with confederates.

*Notes*

- a. Good answer: “The participants’ estimates of the lengths of lines.”
- b. Acceptable answer: “The participants’ answers.”
- c. Do not score: “The participants’ reactions,” because the word “reaction” is too broad.
- d. Do not score: “The participants’ tendency to conform,” because there is no sense of an *operational* definition.
- e. Score the point if the student discusses the measurement only with regard to one group (“the answers of the experimental group”).

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### Question 2 (continued)

#### **Point 4: Hypothesis**

To score this point, students must present the hypothesis—an expectation about the relationship between variables—in either general terms (“People have a tendency to conform in groups”) or specific terms (“The first condition will have more inaccurate estimates of line length than the second condition”).

*Note*

Do not score the point if

- a. the student phrases the hypothesis in the *past tense*, because this represents the results and not the hypothesis (“The hypothesis is that people in the first condition were less accurate”). Accept the present tense, future tense, or subjunctive mood (indicated by the word “would”). The student may begin by saying, “The hypothesis was” and correctly write the hypothesis in an appropriate tense.
- b. the student provides a research question rather than a hypothesis (“The hypothesis is, ‘Do participants conform in groups?’”).
- c. the student discusses only one variable (“Participants will conform”).

#### **Point 5: Debriefing**

To score this point, students must explain that researchers need to inform participants (**after** the experiment) that

- a. the experiment is actually about conformity or
- b. the experiment really is not about perceptual abilities (or line length) or
- c. they were misled by confederates or
- d. the confederates were not actually participants

*Note*

- a. Do not score the point if the student merely states that debriefing occurs after the experiment.
- b. Do not score the point if the student simply discusses deception and not the need to clear up the deception (“Debriefing occurs when deception is used in an experiment”).
- c. Do not score the point if the student limits the discussion of debriefing to a summary of the results of the experiment.
- d. Score the point if a student says that debriefing is not mentioned in the abstract.

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**Question 2 (continued)**

**Part B: Relation of Line Length Estimates to Concepts (Points 6 and 7)**

To score either point in part B, students must *relate their answers to participants' responses or conformity.*

**Point 6: Cognitive dissonance**

To score this point, students must describe

- a. a tension or discomfort created when a participant questions his or her own estimate of line length in light of the confederates' responses or
- b. conflicting (accept mismatched, discrepant, different, etc.) thoughts within a participant or between a participant's thoughts and behaviors ("The thoughts of the participants conflicted with the length estimates they gave").

*Note*

Do not score the point if the student describes a conflict between a participant and confederates ("Dissonance occurs when a participant disagrees with the confederates about line length"), because cognitive dissonance is intrapersonal, not interpersonal.

**Point 7: Maslow's hierarchy**

To score this point, students must *relate* some aspect of Maslow's hierarchy of needs to participants' answers or conformity.

*Note*

Students typically do this by

- a. *relating* love, belonging, acceptance, fitting in, affiliation (or a similar term) to participants' being more likely to conform in their estimates of line length or
- b. *relating* self-actualization to participants' being less likely to conform in their estimates of line length.