

Psychology y163

tma2

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**ASSIGN
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Drawing on appropriate evidence from Chapter 5, describe how groups can influence people in positive and negative ways. For this task I will be studying how groups of people that we have in our lives can affect us in both a positive and a negative way, such as peer pressure from a social group or pressure from family. From a very early age we are influenced by the people around us. If we are in good company and the right crowd we will be affected positively, on the other hand if we are amongst bad company and fall into the wrong crowd we will be affected negatively. To start with I will look at some of the more positive effects that groups of people can have on us as individuals. For example if you are around a good group of friends as you are growing up going into adulthood, this can play a vital role in shaping your personality, and their influences, could change you for the better.

An example of how groups can influence us in a positive way is “Kondo’s Story” taken from “Starting with Psychology” (2010). In this extract from her own book Kondo describes what life is like as a Japanese American and how she tried to fit in with both of her cultures. Although at first she was not accustomed to the Japanese way of doing things in time she began to feel a positive feeling for the Japanese family she was staying with and began to want to behave in a Japanese way. So by the end of the extract she not only feels like an American woman but a Japanese woman also. Spending time with a positive group of Japanese people, made her understand her Japanese roots, traditions and etiquette that are part of their everyday life. As she started to fit in more and more she described how pleased she felt. Looking at what others do around you can bring about a positive change in your way of thinking and how you live your life.

Groups will often shape who you are. It doesn't have to be a close group of friends it could be just people you are regularly around. For example if you are with people who dress smart, are in a stable job and speak in correct English. You will most likely pick up their traits. You will feel this is right and will follow. Muzafer Sherif I (1961) carried out a number of experiments that involved young boys at a summer camp. The experiment worked by splitting the boys into two groups.

As time went on the boys in each group became closer and more competitive. A tournament was arranged and although some aggression was noted other good behaviour stood out such as grouployalty, solidarity and co operation. As the experiment progressed they introduced games which required both groups to work with each other in a positive way which was highly successful. Experiments like this one show that group influence can be a positive one. For the next part of this task I will look at the negative effects that groups of people can often have on us. There are times in all of our lives when we have done certain things or lead a certain lifestyle due to the influence of the people around us. You can find yourself blindly imitating something that you know is wrong but the urge to “ follow the crowd” is so great you ignore what you know is right.

Example of negative group influence “ Starting with Psychology (2010), an experiment carried out in America by Phillip Zimbardo in 1971. He and his colleagues set up a fake prison situation and randomly chose a group of men to act as the guards or the prisoners over a period of two weeks. However after just six days the experiment had to come to an end after both of the groups took their assigned roles too seriously. Both sides were showing

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worrying signs of brutality and emotional disturbance. This experiment showed just how quickly normal rational men could become violent and aggressive when expected to act in a certain way. We have all been in situations where we realise something is expected of us. It is interesting to see, in this example, how easy it would be to conform and fall into the roles that are given to us by others.

Another example I will refer to is Solomon Asch's study in the 1950's. You and 6 other people are seated around a table. The whole group is shown a picture of a straight vertical line. You are then shown three more lines of differing lengths. Everyone is then asked to pick out the line that matches the original one. You then each give your answer out loud. However, six of these people are in on the experiment and deliberately give the wrong answer.

Out of 50 of the people involved 75% of them gave the wrong and followed what the others said, even though the right answer was clearly obvious. Surely this shows how negative group influence can be on one's behaviour. This experiment was harmless, but outside the confines of studies and experiments, following people and trusting others instincts rather than your own conscious could have serious consequences. I think I have shown in the pieces of evidence that I have used, groups can be a good and bad influence. They can provide us with stability, friendship and the feeling of belonging and loyalty as shown in my first 2 pieces of evidence. They can also be damaging and harmful when used by others to lead and deceive people who are vulnerable as shown in I believe we have all experienced some kind of group

influence in our lives whether good or bad. In my opinion these experiences make us who we are and are important part of our lives