

Opinions and social pressure summary essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Around the 1950's a social psychologist Solomon Asch conducted a series of experiments called "Opinions and Social Pressure" to see how groups impact individual others. The basic design of the experiment is seven to nine college students are sat in a classroom for a "visual judgment experiment" and they compare the length of lines. The experimenter had two cards, the first card had one line and the second had 3 lines with different lengths. The students were asked to give their answer aloud and in the order of which they were sitting. There was only one student who didn't know that they were being tested.

He sat close to the end so all the other participants would give their answers before he gave his. Some of the participants were told to give incorrect answers but were also told to give the correct answer every so often so the naïve didn't suspect. There were 18 trials in each series and on 12 the majority gives the wrong answers. Of 123 subjects put to the test, 75% agreed with the majority. 25% of the subjects were completely independent and never went along with the majority. This shows that subjects are very likely to agree with everyone else. The participants that comply do it for one of the two reasons: 1. they believe the group is better informed than they are or 2. They do not want to be different.

Asch's experiment was modified to examine the question which aspect of the influence of a majority is more important- the size of the majority or its unanimity? The size of the majority does matter but only to a certain point. When a subject was confronted with a single individual, he continued to answer independently and correctly. When increased by two, the pressure became substantial: minority subjects accepted the wrong answer 13.6 per

<https://assignbuster.com/opinions-and-social-pressure-summary-essay-sample/>

cent of the time and after increased by three, the subject's errors went up to 32.8 per cent. Uprising of the majority's unanimity had a striking effect. In Asch's experiment, the subject was given a partner that did not know of the prearranged agreement among the rest or an individual who was instructed to give the correct answers throughout. The company of the partner reduces the majority of much of its power. The pressure was reduced to one fourth. The weakest persons did not yield, the partner was credited with inspiring confidence but the subject still decided to be independent.

Asch questioned if the partner's effect was a consequence of his dissent, or if it was related to his accuracy. They introduced a person was instructed to protest from the majority but to disagree with the subject. They studied the relative influence of "compromising" and "extremist" by having the majority always chose the worst answer and the instructed dissenter to pick the line that was closer to the length of the standard line and the results were clear. When a balanced dissenter is present the effect of the majority on the subject decreases by about one third and extremes of yielding disappear. But when the dissenter always chose the line that was far more different from the standard, the results were different. The errors dropped to only nine percent and all the errors were of the moderate variety. Asch concluded that dissents per se increased independence and moderated the errors that occurred, and that the direction of dissent exerted consistent effects.

In the past experiments, each subject was observed only in a single setting. Asch then turned to studying the effects upon a given individual of a change in the situation to which he was exposed. The first experiment tested the <https://assignbuster.com/opinions-and-social-pressure-summary-essay-sample/>

consequences of losing or gaining a partner. The instructed partner gave the correct answer on the first six trials. With his support the subject usually resisted pressure from the majority: 18 of 27 subjects were completely independent then after six trials the partner joined the minority.

Asch stated, “ It was surprising to find that the experience of having had a partner and of having braved the majority opposition with them had failed to strengthen the individuals’ independence.” Asch then thought that maybe he had overlooked an important circumstance. They changed the conditions so the partner would leave the group at a certain point. The partner’s effect outlasted his presence. The errors increased after his departure, but less markedly that after a partner switches to the majority. As long as the subject had someone on his side, he was invariably independent, but as soon as he was alone, the tendency to fit the majority rose abruptly. Even when the difference between two lines was seven inches, there were still some who yielded to the error of the majority.

Asch also states, “ When consensus comes under the dominance of conformity, the social process is polluted and the individual at the same time surrenders the powers on which his functioning as a feeling and thinking being depends.” It boosts questions about our ways of education and about the values that guide our conduct. Asch’s experiment has shown that individuals are impacted by groups.