

HSC Course: Social Conformity and Nonconformity

Title: *Understanding 'conformity'*



In this tutorial you will learn about the factors which influence conformity and obedience in individuals

- **Syllabus dot point:** factors that influence conformity and obedience in individuals

View this short film and then answer the questions below.

Click here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S0BqERRkk_8



This is Solomon Asch's experiment testing the idea that conformity refers to an individual's tendency to follow the unspoken rules or behaviours of the social group to which he or she belongs. Now have a look at this clip: <https://vimeo.com/61349466>

In the table below, reflect on which of these factors appeared to influence 'conformity' in the two examples, and to what extent.

Factor	Explanation	Your reflection
Normative social influence	Individuals conform to avoid rejection and gain approval. This multiplies with increasing awareness of prevailing norms.	
Informational social influence	Informational social influence is based on the way people cognitively process information about a situation – they evaluate their own views in comparison with what others do.	

Confidence and self-esteem	The more confident people are, and the higher their self-esteem, the less likely they are to conform.	
Presence of an ally/size of majority	When non-conformists 'join forces', overall conformity reduces. But generally, conformity increases with size of the group.	

Now, use this link to answer the questions below:

Click here:

<http://psychology.about.com/od/classicpsychologystudies/p/conformity.htm>

1. How did variations in Asch's experiment influence the degree of conformity?
2. Explain which of the factors in the table above may have affected these variations.
3. What conclusions were drawn from Asch's experiment?
4. What criticisms have been made of Asch's experiment?

Explain why the following **course concepts** are relevant to a discussion of Asch's experiment.

Persons		Social cognition	
Power		Deindividuation	
Authority		Social cohesion	
Identity		Self-concept	

Check your understanding of these concepts by following this link:

http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_hsc/pdf_doc/society-culture-st6-syl-from2015.pdf

Ethical issues in psychology experiments

Follow these links to watch and read about Stanley Milgram's 'obedience' experiment, then answer the questions below.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTX42IVDwA4>

<http://psychology.about.com/od/historyofpsychology/a/milgram.htm>



1. What did this experiment show about the relationship between **power** and **obedience**?
2. Reflect on the 'situational factors' Milgram thought affected the behaviour of subjects in his experiment. Do you agree? Why/why not?
3. Evaluate the ethical issues associated with Milgram's experiment.

Respond to this **HSC-style question**:

Analyse *three* factors that influence conformity and obedience in individuals. (300 words)