
Conformity: Term Analysis, Examples And Own Experience

Humans are often depicted as social beings in need to form connections with other individuals whether as partnerships or friendships. And though we constantly attempt to maintain our individuality and in times isolate ourselves from others in order to avoid 'following the herd', our beliefs and behaviours are often affected through the exposure of other's actions (Kassin, Fein, & Markus, 2017). For example, the connection between teenagers/young adults and social media. Social media consists of influencers, such as Instagram/fitness models or vloggers on YouTube, who utilize their platform to promote certain products including clothing/makeup brands and dietary supplements, to name a few, and though they are majorly paid to advertise these products their followers don't often take that factor under consideration instead they pay attention to the constant display and positive reviews of these products; as a result, their followers eventually take on the sense of style.

Humans are social creatures who fear being excluded from social groups they are attempting to be part of. As a result, individuals often fall under conformity, the psychological phenomenon in which individuals tend to change their perception, opinions, and behaviour in order to fit in the socially accepted standards (Kassin et al., 2017). There is a rise of conformity through the pressure often felt by the size of the majority, to further explain, the more individuals within a group agree on a particular subject, the more prone other individuals are likely to agree because it may be perceived easier to agree than being considered an outcast by acting or judging otherwise. This is typically more effective when we have acknowledged the situational norms, also known as normative social influence (Kassin et al., 2017). For example, on a study based on littering, elaborated by Robert Cialdini (2003) and his colleagues. Research confederates handed out handbills to amusement park visitors in different areas within the park, which varied on the amount of litter perceived, this indicated how others had previously behaved perhaps influencing the behaviour of the incoming visitors. As a result, the more litter the section consisted of, the more likely visitors were to continue tossing the handbills (Kassin et al., 2017).

In the television series, Friends, Rachel starts her new job at Ralph Lauren, and like any new employee her goal is to get her boss' liking. She instantly notices a bond between her boss and coworker Nancy, as they share the liking between two different clothing designs. At first, Rachel demonstrates defiance to conformity as she disagrees with their choice though she quickly apologizes. The scene then continues with the duo going on a smoke break, her boss asks Rachel if she smokes to which she replies no and how her father, who is a doctor, constantly told her horrific stories; again she apologizes upon noticing her boss' glare. She later tells Monica and Chandler that they came back from their smoking break, making the rest of the decisions, explaining that she felt punished for making the decision to not smoke. While now reconsidering her initial decision, she attempts to justify taking on smoking by questioning what if they continue all the decision-making during their smoke breaks while she's in her office, and once there's an opportunity for promotion the obvious choice would be Nancy. The next scene demonstrates Rachel beginning to give in to conformity as she joins her boss and Nancy on their smoke break, first without smoking, her boss then continues to talk about the fall collection including Rachel in the conversation until she coughs, which causes them to move away while apologizing for smoking around her. Rachel then overhears her boss telling Nancy she's the

best which leads her to ask for a cigarette and again joining the duo, who questioned Rachel due to her initial statement. Rachel then claimed she misunderstood, attempting to ensure that she does in fact smoke. Rachel demonstrated conformity as she changed her individual choice to not smoke in order to not be left out of important decision-making and avoid missing out on future opportunities for promotion by initiating a bond with her boss through a 'mutual' habit. Though Rachel publicly conformed, she did not completely agree with her boss's smoking-habit in a private manner (accessible on Netflix, season 5, episode 18, start/end time: 4:51-9:35).

My initial thought on conformity was that it mainly applied through figures of authority and citizens specifically throughout a time of crisis, which can lead to horrific results. For example, Nazis and their treatment towards the Jews throughout the Holocaust. Conformity is a phenomenon that should not be perceived as complex as it's often displayed in our everyday lives, most often unnoticed. For example, attending a wedding, majority of the guests attend the proper dress code such as suits or dresses, it would be viewed out of the ordinary to dress casual such as a T-shirt and jeans for what we consider a formal occasion. Another example, standing in line, either while waiting to get on the bus or waiting to place your order in a coffee shop, we often follow this norm because we perceive other individuals already doing so. And attempting to go against this norm is often perceived as displeasing, perhaps leading to altercations with other individuals.

Throughout my freshman year in college, I was often invited to get-togethers by acquaintances, though I attended I would not partake in drinking because I felt uncomfortable drinking around individuals I didn't know completely well and often labelled themselves as 'heavy drinkers'. I often felt peer pressured as these individuals constantly offered to buy me drinks and would start saying comments like "don't be a baby," regardless I would simply decline, demonstrating what I believe is defiance to conformity. Overall, the people within the group weren't bad people, I simply felt excluded because they could not accept my decision to not drink at their level or at all, leading me to disassociate myself from the group. Quite honestly I did not want to 'follow the herd,' I don't think I would change my behaviour had I fully understood conformity because I believe my preferences and perspectives define me. As an individual, I prefer to be viewed as an 'outsider' than fall under the influences that I perceive would only result to negative outcomes. Conformity, just as any other concept, shares its pros and cons. For instance, it can be perceived as healthy as it allows individuals to coexist within large groups such as communities, for example following the rules of driving. On the contrary, conformity may lead to dreadful consequences, for example individuals falling under peer pressure leading to drug abuse habits (Kassin et al., 2017).