



# Analysing conformity

## Module 2 11.2.1 majority influence

### This activity will help you to...

- Understand and recall explanations and types of conformity.
- Distinguish between informational and normative influence, compliance and internalisation.
- Apply your understanding of psychology to real world situations.
- Analyse behaviour in psychological terms.

### Not all conformity is the same

Since we started looking at conformity we have seen that conformity does not always happen for the same reasons and can have different results, depending on the person, the situation they are in and their relationship with the social group (perceived to be) applying the pressure. Specifically, we have seen that conformity may result from either **informational** or **normative influence** (or both) and that a person may either **internalise** or merely **comply** with the behaviour and values of the group.

Below are some studies and situations involving conformity. You must analyse each one in terms of the social-psychological processes taking place. For each example:

- You **must** state whether normative or informational influence is taking place, and whether the person or people complied or internalised.
- You **should** explain what it is about the situation that led you to those conclusions: why is it compliance or internalisation; why informational or normative influence?

Write a couple of sentences about each example explaining your views and reasoning.

1. Mark has just started a new job. At lunchtime, some of his colleagues started talking about immigrants to this country, expressing the view that they were lazy scroungers and didn't deserve to be here. Mark's parents were immigrants and he disagreed with what his colleagues were saying, but he didn't say anything to them. He just kept quiet and nodded occasionally.
2. Jenny is in her first year at university. When she first arrived she became friends with a group of women who had been at school together. They were all vegetarian and very concerned with animal rights. Midway through the year, Jenny is also becoming concerned with issues like scientific testing on animals. Additionally, she now only eats free-range meat and is thinking of stopping eating meat altogether.
3. It is Surita's first day in her new teaching job. Her placement schools were each very different in how the staff interacted with the pupils. One was very formal, the other more relaxed. Surita isn't sure about her new school so, when everyone is going into assembly, she watches her colleagues carefully to see how they interact with the children. They all seem to be smiling and talking to the pupils in a welcoming manner, so Surita decides that she will behave similarly.
4. The studies by Asch (1951), Sherif (1935) and Jenness (1932).

If you finish that, think up some example situations of your own to illustrate the different processes of conformity.