

Factors that influence conformity:

Conformity

Obedience

The nature of social conformity and nonconformity

Students develop an understanding of the nature of social conformity and nonconformity by examining:

- factors that influence conformity and obedience in individuals
- responses to social influence: acquiescence, internalisation and identification
- deindividuation: the impact of personal anonymity of individuals in groups
- how nonconformity determines the boundary between 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' behaviours and attitudes
- the social costs and benefits of nonconformity for both individuals and the wider society
- the impact of agenda setting, including the role of the media, on attitude formation in individuals and groups
- the ways the ideologies, values and behaviours of a subcultural group currently perceived as not conforming to the wider society may influence others and lead to social change.

Related Depth Study Concepts

Related Concept	Definition (Syllabus)
Commercialisation	
Consumption	
Ideology	
Commodification	
Change	
Institutional Power	
Continuity	
Conflict	
Values	

Contemporary context

The following points are to be integrated across the study of *Social Conformity and Nonconformity*:

- use examples drawn from contemporary society
- assess the impact of technologies, including communication technologies, on social conformity and nonconformity
- examine a contemporary issue associated with conformity and/or nonconformity using the research method of observation.



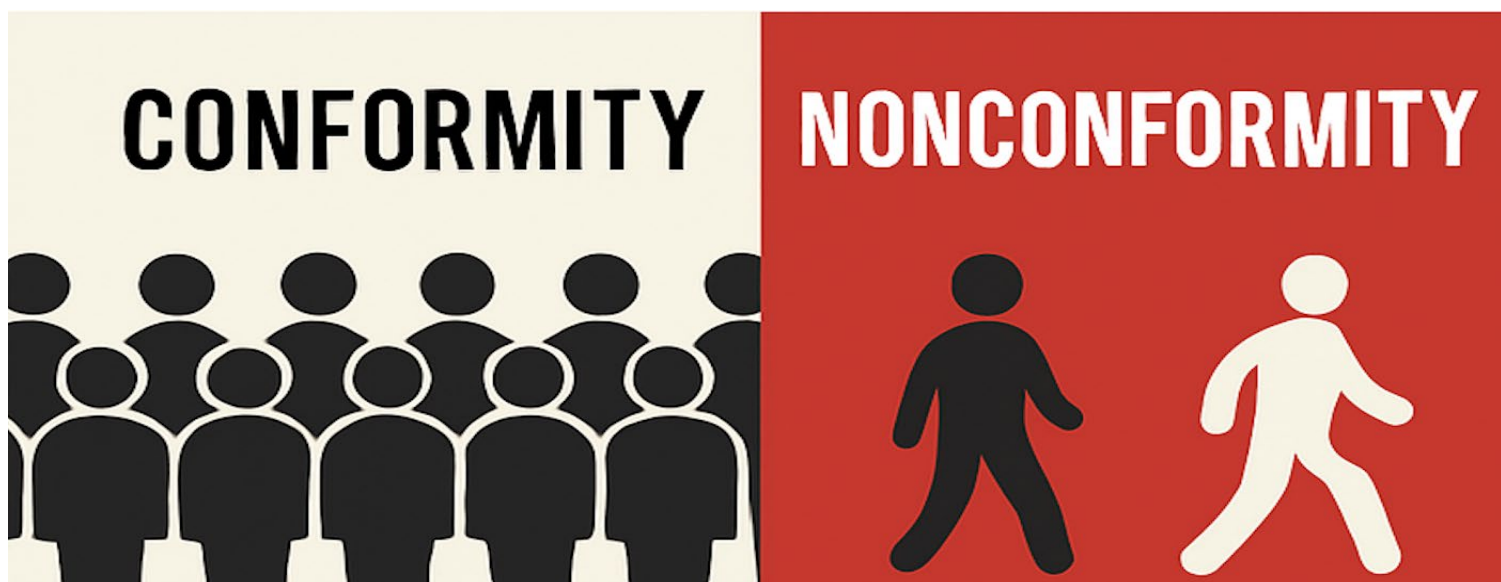
Syllabus Point	Example(s): Chicken Jockey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • responses to social influence: acquiescence, internalisation and identification 	<p>acquiescence</p> <p>identification</p> <p>internalisation</p>

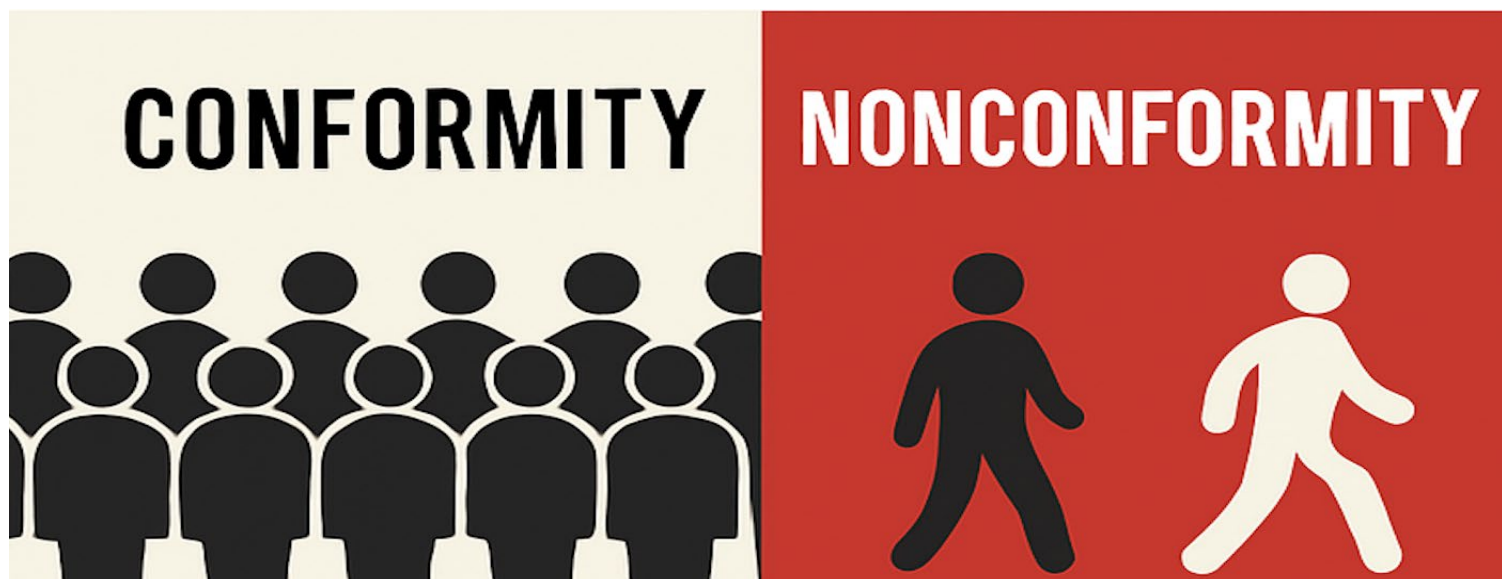
Syllabus Point	Example(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • deindividuation: the impact of personal anonymity of individuals in 	

groups	
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Syllabus Point	Example(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The social costs and benefits of nonconformity for both individuals and the wider society. 	

Syllabus Point	Example(s): #Women2Drive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the ways the ideologies, values and behaviours of a subcultural group currently perceived as not conforming to the wider society may influence others and lead to social change. 	





The HSC

Wednesday, 5 November 2025

Things to think about:

- **Don't tell stories!** Often students fall into a narrative rather than addressing the directive verbs or the concepts within the question.
- Make sure you use a range of examples from within the topic and can explicitly link them to both the directive verb and any highlighted concepts.
 - Focus on the conceptual rather than the concrete characteristics of specific storylines/events
- Technologies are part of the contemporary context for each depth study - there is always the scope to include technologies in your response.
- While it is important to understand and be able to apply a range of examples to each syllabus point, you cannot pre-learn answers! Essay questions will be a combination of syllabus points and concepts - you must APPLY your knowledge.
- Know the syllabus and use the language of the syllabus.
 - I.e. Acquiesce OR deviance
- In the 5 mark response - ensure you identify the concepts and when possible, make a judgement.

- In the 15 mark response - ensure you are making a judgement AND try and use examples from across the micro, meso and macro levels of society.
- Do you know how to examine a contemporary issue in Social conformity and nonconformity using the method of observation?

Writing with IDEA:

- + **Identify** - Components of Question
 - × language specific to the question
 - × terminology/concepts specific to the question
 - × Verb - WHAT IS IT ASKING?
- + **Describe** - Relevant and Explicit content
 - × Outline content that addresses the question
 - × Examples should be explicit and relevant to course content
 - × Should make clear WHAT you are referencing and relevant concepts
- + **Explain** - Cause and Effect, showing relationship to examples with terminology/concepts
 - × Language should be unambiguous
 - × Showing relationships between examples, content and terminology/concepts
 - × “Because, leads to, therefore, consequently”
- + **Analyse** - Make an explicit judgement
 - × Includes all high order directives including - **To what extent, Assess**
 - × Make a judgment in reference to the question - ensuring that you use language to show synthesis.
 - × **Therefore....this means...**
 - × **One could conclude....thus this impacts**

Criteria	Mark
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clearly accounts (states reasons for) for deviance as a response by individuals to agenda setting.Effectively applies relevant course concepts and language	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Accounts (states reasons for) for deviance as a response by individuals to agenda setting.Applies relevant course concepts and language	4
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Describes deviance as a response by individuals to agenda setting.Uses some relevant course concepts and language	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Outlines deviance and/or agenda settingRefers to some course concepts and/or language	2
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Provides some relevant information	1

HSC 2024 - 15 Mark Essay

Analyse: Identify components and the relationship between them; draw out and relate implications

HSC 2024: DECONSTRUCT THE QUESTION - SURVIVALISTS

Analyse the role of **social cognition** and **gender** in influencing conformity within ONE group.

**IDENTIFY
(Concepts)**

DESCRIBE

**EXPLAIN
(Cause and effect)**

ANALYSIS

To make note for your own preparation: In BOTH 2023 & 2024 the 15 mark HSC question contained ONLY concepts - it has NO explicit syllabus point.

Students must be prepared to respond to questions driven by the language of the course and CANNOT rote learn essays against the syllabus.

Social cognition

Social cognition promotes encoding, storage, retrieval and processing.

Women are often associated with 'gathering' activities such as canning or sewing. While men work with 'hunter' roles such as animal husbandry and building (BOL).

Therefore, gender has minimal influence when examining conformity within survivalists.

Gender

When examined in relation to gender - there is little differentiation in application of values of the movement to gender.

However, within the movement more broadly - there is very little separation based on gender as all adherents share common values that encourage preparedness.

However, social cognition is significant due to the fact that survivalists operate in phantom cells - social cognition ensures adherents share and adhere to common values to support preparedness.

Therefore, social cognition is more applicable to survivalists values that promote shared expectations of adherents as a whole.

- 1. Individual salvation**
- 2. Education**
- 3. Quality of life insurance**
- 4. Keep it to yourself**

HSC Criteria: 2024

Criteria	Marks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a comprehensive analysis of the role of social cognition and gender in influencing conformity within ONE group Supports the response with a breadth of detailed and accurate information and effectively integrates appropriate examples Presents a sustained, logical and cohesive response Effectively applies relevant course concepts and language 	13–15
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides a thorough analysis of the role of social cognition and gender in influencing conformity within ONE group Supports the response with detailed and accurate information and integrates appropriate examples Presents a logical and cohesive response Applies relevant course concepts and language 	10–12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides an analysis of the role of social cognition and gender in influencing conformity within ONE group Supports the response with relevant information and uses example(s) Presents an organised response using course concepts and language 	7–9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrates some understanding of social cognition and/or gender within ONE group Includes course concepts and/or language Refers to an example(s) 	4–6
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides some relevant information 	1–3

Sample HSC Response: Drag

- The social cognition that allows individuals to understand the nature of nonconformist behaviours within the drag community, and the collective practice of challenging gender norms, promotes conformity within the subcultural group.
- Drag subcultures use social cognition to redefine gender norms for the individual and the group. This is experienced by members performing in established drag communities and aspiring newcomers who use the media and TV shows to understand gender practices.
- Gender expression in drag often involves adherence to performative or subverted gender traits, reinforcing the subculture's standards.

- Performers engage in cognitive processes that re-evaluate traditional gender roles and lead to productive fluidity and cohesion within the community.
- Social cognition within drag communities often leads to collective decision-making about what is valued in gender performance, thus shaping conformity to certain styles or aesthetics. For example, presenting an exaggerated hourglass figure through padding and corsetry. Performers who do not conform to these body standards might face criticism or exclusion.
- In competitions, drag performers are often judged based on their adherence to certain standards of femininity, performance, and fashion. This can encourage conformity as performers aim to meet these criteria to win titles and recognition. :

Marker Feedback (2024)

Question 14(b)

In better responses, students were able to:

- present a sustained and cohesive analysis by clearly addressing all components of the question and maintaining a focused response
- engage conceptually with the question by considering the role of both social cognition and gender as well as the interactions within and between these concepts
- clearly explain why/how examples of social cognition and gender have influenced conformity within the group
- apply a wide range of detailed and accurate examples from a clearly defined, appropriate subcultural group
- integrate highly relevant related course concepts and language such as social cognition, gender, social cohesion, types of conformity, norms and sanctions.

Areas for students to improve include:

- constructing a central argument that provides a balanced approach and effectively engages with all components of the question
- demonstrating effective communication by avoiding lengthy descriptions
- demonstrating an understanding of relevant concepts such as social cognition, while also distinguishing between social cognition, gender and social cohesion

- discussing the role of social cognition and gender in influencing conformity within the non-conformist group, rather than perceptions of social cognition and gender across wider society
- enhancing the depth of analysis by integrating an appropriate and wide range of examples to support informed judgements.

Student Activity:

Deconstruct the 15 mark responses from 2023 and 2022; then in dot points, brainstorm your response using the IDEA acronym. Use this to help create a sample answer.

- *When planning on your own, you may wish to do this for each paragraph*

HSC 2023: DECONSTRUCT THE QUESTION (15 marks)			
Assess the significance of both worldview and self-concept in the development of ONE subcultural group.			
Define the directive:			
IDENTIFY (Concepts)	DESCRIBE	EXPLAIN (Cause and Effect)	ANALYSIS

HSC 2022: DECONSTRUCT THE QUESTION (15 marks)

Assess the effects of positive and negative interactions between ONE group and the wider society.

Define the directive:

IDENTIFY (Concepts)	DESCRIBE	EXPLAIN (Cause and Effect)	ANALYSIS

Additional Focus Study Information

*Jessie Forbes HSC Study Day 2024

Focus Group	Syllabus Point	Content
Bra Boys	The role of status, authority, power, privilege and responsibility within the group	<p>Authority: legitimate use of power</p> <p>Power: The ability or capacity to influence or persuade others to a point of view or action to which they would not normally agree.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Ma is matriarch of group. When the boys are young she has power over them (making them attend school), but as she/they age, she becomes a figure of authority for the group ● Abberton brothers have highest status as founders/leaders of the Bra Boys. Also feel responsible for leadership and guidance of younger members ● Koby is most predominate, becomes spokesperson for the group and holds authority over the 'Bra Boys' as a whole. ● Able to maintain status as leaders and as a predominant surf gang through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Adherence to 'surf tribe' culture ○ Showing respect to older surfers of the community ○ Power through possession and ownership tied to identity. <p>Privilege:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● To be apart of the group one had to prove themselves and earn a spot ● As a part of the Bra Boys you were given the privilege to use the group handshake

		<p>which was a strong grip, symbolic of their strong bond and/or able to get the 'My Brothers Keeper' tattoo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This brotherhood turned ugly as tribal warfare developed due to localism • Localism is at the heart of the brotherhood.
Bra Boys	<p>Attitudes of the group to nonconformity and the role of sanctions within the group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bra Boys thrive off being nonconformists and diverting from societal norms while partaking in surf culture • This is displayed in how the group chooses the laid back surf lifestyle to create a living for themselves, rather than having traditional working habits • The group are also nonconformists as shown by their reckless behaviour and careless surfing demonstrations • The use of a group handshake and group tattoo serve as sanctions as they define who is in the group and also form an unbreakable (irremovable) bond • If group members choose to disobey the Bra Boy values they will be removed from the group and no longer regarded as one of the boys • Sanctions are severe as this causes members to lose their group identity and their sense of self.
Christiania	<p>How the concepts of cohesion and community operate to define the group's identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer pressure operated in a positive way to advocate for personal and social responsibility • Consensus democracy • Operates on a self-administered system that allocates funds every year to maintain common property, kindergartens, sewers, recycling and waste collection • Mutual support and self sufficiency • Must prove yourself willing to work • The lack of a formal hierarchy in Christiania means that sanctions for violating group norms are everybody's responsibility • As Christiania has no formal police or justice

		<p>system, sanctions are carried out by Christianites as the Common Law has been created by and reflects the values of the group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Common Purse: Christiania operates on a self-administered system that allocates funds every year to maintain common property, kindergartens, sewers, recycling and waste collection. It has its own court that deals with police matters, negotiations with the rest of Denmark and community disputes.
Christiania	Positive and negative interactions with the wider society	<p>Positive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2011: principles threatened when the Danish government insisted that Christiania either purchase their land or be bought out. Because of Christianites' rejection of property rights, the prospect of ownership was unappealing. So they set up a foundation to buy the land. Many supporters of the commune jumped at the chance to "buy a little share of freedom", more than 12.5m kroner was raised, a mortgage was secured and Christiania was saved. ● Annual 'Degrowth' festival promotes human interaction over market relations: resist the burden of conspicuous consumption. <p>Negative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 2016: Policeman shot on 'pusher street,' ended uneasy peace between law enforcement and cannabis trade ● Drug trade continues today - disorganised ● Many view Christiania as a lawless, crime riddled society ● Increasing gang activity as outsiders manipulate Christianites to sell cannabis.
The Amish	Ways in which the group influences its individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Highly value family life. Conforming to traditional values and attitudes ● Society is based on cooperation ● All Amish yield to a higher authority: God

	<p>members in order to achieve group cohesion</p> <p>the role of group values and norms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baptism occurs between the ages of 18-22, it is a commitment made with the Church body to God. • By accepting the Ordnung, Amish establish a commonly accepted set of values that are willingly adopted. • The vows made in Baptism are for life – breaking rules can result in excommunication or shunning. • Amish feel that living by a set of rules is important to achieving a strong Christian faith.
The Amish	<p>Attitudes of the group to nonconformity and the role of sanctions within the group</p>	<p>Attitudes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amish life is directed by the rule of the Ordnung • Without adherence to the Ordnung, members of the community are turned away • Modern technologies are Western ways of life are not accepted within the community • Praise and support of those who practice their faith without distraction • Community works together for the common good • Belief in forgiveness <p>Sanctions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shunning & ex-communication • Threat of disconnection from family and community
Survivalists	<p>Perceptions of the group by the wider society and the implications of these perceptions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survivalists operate as individuals and are often seen as the 'lone-wolf'. This stereotype has been driven by extremists within the community • Often seen as dangerous or unhinged as a result of extremist behaviour, which often results in legal investigation, further perpetuating the stereotype • Terminology is key to the way the group is perceived by society e.g. use of sayings such as 'bug out bag', 'zombies'. It creates fear and misconception surrounding the group • Echoed through Hollywood portrayals e.g. <i>The Last of Us</i> & <i>A Quiet Place</i> • This results in society holding a normalcy bias of the group, which further perpetuates their negative stereotypes • This was challenged during the Covid-19 pandemic,

		<p>where the society was forced into self-isolation and many experienced 'panic buying' (or the fear of). This allowed people to empathise with the ethos of the Survivalist community - one of self salvation</p>
Satmar Community	<p>The role of status, authority, power, privilege and responsibility within the group</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sect of Hasidic Judaism (ultra-Orthodox), a patriarchal society ● Women are discriminated against and are expected to bear children to reproduce to counter the number of Jewish people lost in the Holocaust ● The structure is static and steeped in history where <i>God is the most supreme being</i> ● The <i>Rabbi</i> is considered a righteous man and his authority is inherited. The Rabbi is leader of the 'court' where he administers blessings, provides guidance and chooses occupations ● Study is disciplined of the Torah and is delivered by the Rabbi ● The <i>Vaad</i> is a council of leaders who hold authority over community members, including the ban of internet and mobile access ● Marriages are arranged through the <i>shadchanim</i> (matchmaker). This is linked to the family's status within the group, devoutness to religion and performance at school ● They have power in the size of the group, and affiliations with political parties. This financial tie increases their intentional social isolation.
Satmar Community	<p>Ways in which the group influences its individual members in order to achieve group cohesion</p> <p>peer pressure</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Behaviours exist on a micro-level to influence group cohesion ● <i>Mitzvit</i> - a set of 613 commandments (positive and negative) for living that must be known and adhered to by all, not doing so results in an overwhelming sense of guilt ● Women attend 'bride-school' to understand what is expected of them by their husbands. Divorce can result in ex-communication from the group ● Students are taught not to question anything and follow instructions blindly ● Contracts between school and home exist to ensure consistency in teachings and behaviours (e.g. use of phones and technology).

