

# Asch 1951



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The lines' Again, you are all aware of the procedure. Briefly stated: participants are deceived into taking part in a study on visual perception. They are seated at a desk with others that they believe to be fellow participants but who in reality are in league with the researchers (stooges or confederates). Lines are presented on a screen and participants simply have to say which line (out of 3 possibilities, is the same length as the target line). The stooges get the right answer on the first two trials but then start to make deliberate mistakes.

Conformity is measured by counting the number of times the real participant conforms when stooges give the wrong answer. Mind Changers: Solomon Asch Possible questions: 'Describe the procedure. ' Easy peasy, describe the experiment as above. You could mention some of the variations. You could also mention the pilot study that Asch carried out first in which errors were only made on 3 trials out of 720. 'Describe the findings. ' This one is more likely and also more troublesome. What you must avoid doing is wasting time by describing the procedure.

To answer this one, first of all mention Asch's initial findings: Overall conformity rate was 32% (unless your surname is Eysenck or Flanagan, in which case it's 37%). This means that participants conformed on 32% of all trials. However, within this there were substantial individual differences: Nobody conformed on 100% of trials 13 out of the original 50 never conformed at all Highest rate of conformity was a participant who conformed on 11 out of 12 trials (must have felt a right plonker when he was debriefed! . 75% conformed at least once. The method The procedure is very artificial (it lacks ecological validity) in that participants are being asked to

conform when there is clearly a different and obviously correct answer. In everyday life disagreements occur over politics, religion, tastes etc. , when correct answers are not obvious, except we all agree that Kylie is lush! Results do not appear to be consistent over time.

Later studies such as Perrin and Spencer's in Britain in the 1980s found much lower levels of conformity. It has been suggested that Asch's original was post war when America was very wary of Communist take over when US citizens were worried about being seen to be different for fear of incrimination. Levels of conformity did fall in the late 60s when it was popular for students in particular to protest against the Vietnam War, showing low levels of conformity.

The study is androcentric. Only male participants took part. The ethics Participants were deceived so were unable to give their informed consent. Note: whenever stooges are used there is always deception. Participants were clearly stressed and some must have been embarrassed by the procedure and suffered some loss of self esteem once they had been informed that it had all been a big con. This all constitutes 'psychological harm. '