Asch

Findings and Conclusion

- In the control study where all the confederates gave truthful answers, people gave the incorrect answer less than 1% of the time. This showed the task was unambiguous and the correct answer was obvious.

- In the baseline study, where confederates gave unanimous answers:
  - 36.8% of the time, participants gave incorrect answers/conformed.
  - 25% of participants never conform/rejected an incorrect answer.
  - 75% conform/conformed at least once.
  - 5% conform/conformed in all the critical trials.
- This concludes that most people are influenced by social pressure at least some of the time.

- In the debrief, those who conformed explained they genuinely believed the others were right and there vision was deficient. Some also said they conformed to not sound stupid and avoid ridicule - this shows normative social influence.

- Some participants explained they guessed the purpose of the study and conformed not to spoil the experiment.

- On variations of the study:
  - When a truthful partner was introduced, pressure to conform was reduced and participants only conformed 25% as often as in the baseline study.
  - This concludes that people conform to avoid social isolation so when they had a partner to support them, they could answer truthfully as they knew they wouldn’t be socially isolated.
  - Plus, when a truthful partner was added but stopped being independent halfway through and started to conform. This meant the naive participant generally followed the partner, being independent at first and then conforming to the group.

- Asch concluded that:
  - The findings suggest a strong tendency to conform to an obviously incorrect answer.
  - Conformity happens more often when the group is unanimous.
  - The study demonstrated normative social influence as even though participants knew the correct answer, they publicly conformed in order to be accepted.

- Asch thought this study raised concerns about education as he used well educated, young and intelligent participants. The fact that they were willing to call black white just to conform is worrying for society.

- But, there is hope in this study as 25% of participants never gave an incorrect answer which shows that individuals who have strong confidence in their own judgement can resist the pressure to conform. Individuals in the experiment agreed that independence is preferable to conformity.