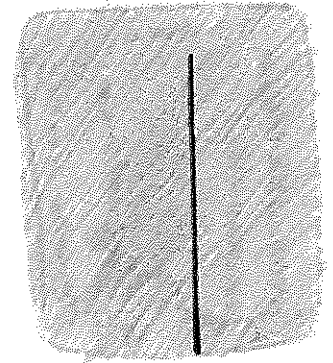
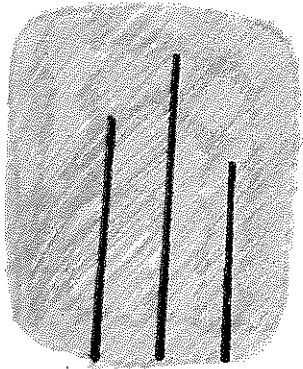


What they did...

Asch (1956) asked student volunteers to take part in a vision test. All but one of the participants were confederates of the experimenter. The real purpose of the experiment was to see how the one 'real' participant would react to the behavior of confederates. They were seated in a room and asked to look at three lines of different length. They were asked in turn to state



Standard Line



Comparison Lines

which line was the same length as the standard. Although fairly obvious which line it was confederates were asked to make the wrong choice. Asch was interested in whether people would stick to what they believed to be right, or cave in to the pressure of the majority and go along with its decision.

Procedures...

In total 123 male American undergraduates were tested. Asch showed a series of lines to participants seated around a table. Participants always answered in the same order (with the real participant always answering second to last or last). The confederates were instructed to give the same incorrect answer on 12 of the 18 trials.

Findings...

On 12 critical trials, 36.8% of the responses made by true participants were incorrect. On a quarter of the participants never conformed on any of the trials. To confirm that the stimulus lines were indeed unambiguous, Asch conducted a control trial with no confederates giving the wrong answer. They found mistakes are still made around 1% of the time, but this could not explain the relatively high levels of conformity in the main study.