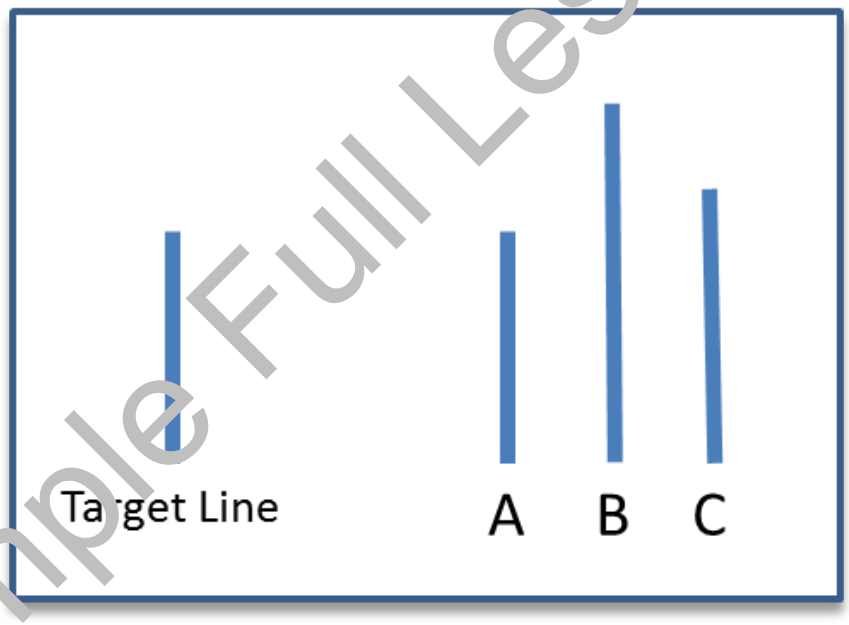
Social Psychology

Evaluating Research Examining Conformity



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Jenness (1932)

- **Jenness (1932)** was one of the first psychologists to study conformity. His experiment used an **ambiguous situation** involving a glass bottle filled with beans. He asked participants individually to estimate how many beans the bottle contained.
- Jenness then put the group in a room with the bottle, and asked them to provide a group estimate through discussion.
- **Question: What do you think Jenness (1932) found?**
- **Task: Answer questions 1 and 2 on the handout provided.**

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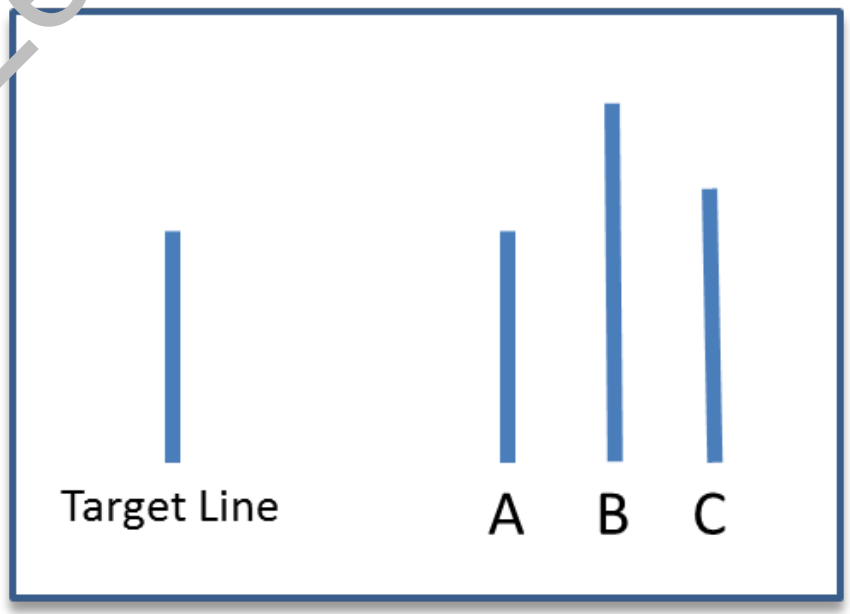
Full Lesson PowerPoint Key

- **Green = Key Word or Researcher**
- **Blue = Question / Discussion**
- **Purple = Task / Activity**

- **Task 1: You will be shown a summary of Asch (1951). Your task is to read the summary on the white board and identify the 10 mistakes in my summary…**



Can you spot the 10 mistakes?

- Aim: To see if participants would conform and give the incorrect answer in a situation where the correct answers are always really obvious (ambiguous situation).

- Method: Asche used a large group of confederates (fake participants) and 60 real participants who were Male American postgraduates. In the experiment, the real participants were put into groups of 6, where they were the only real participant and the other 7 were confederates. Before the experiment started the confederates were instructed by Asch to give the wrong answer on 14 of the 18 trials, these 14 trials were called the experimental trials. Once in their groups they were all shown a standard line and three comparison lines of different lengths. They were then all told to call out, in turn, which of the 3 lines was the same length as the test line. The correct answer was always obvious.

- Results: The overall conformity rate on the critical trials was 39%. However, 26 % never conformed at all.

- Conclusion: Even in unambiguous situations, there is still pressure to conform to the majority. From the post experiment interviews, Asch found that some people experienced informational social influence, so conformed to avoid being rejected. Whereas others experienced informational social influence so conformed because they doubted their own judgement.

Can you spot the 10 mistakes?

- **Aim:** To see if participants would conform and give the incorrect answer in a situation where the correct answers are always really obvious (**un**ambiguous situation).

- **Method:** Asch**e** used a large group of confederates (fake participants) and **50** real participants who were Male American **Under**graduates. In the experiment, the real participants were put into groups of **8**, where they were the only real participant and the other 7 were confederates. Before the experiment started the confederates were instructed by Asch to give the wrong answer on **12** of the 18 trials, these **12** trials were called the **critical trials**. Once in their groups they were all shown a standard line and three comparison lines of different lengths. They were then all told to call out, in turn, which of the 3 lines was the same length as the target line. The correct answer was always obvious.

- **Results:** The overall conformity rate on the critical trials was **32%**. However, 26 % never conformed at all.

- **Conclusion:** Even in unambiguous situations, there is still pressure to conform to the majority.From the post experiment interviews, Asch found that some people experienced **normative** social influence, so conformed to avoid being rejected. Whereas others experienced informational social influence so conformed because they doubted their own judgement.

Social Psychology

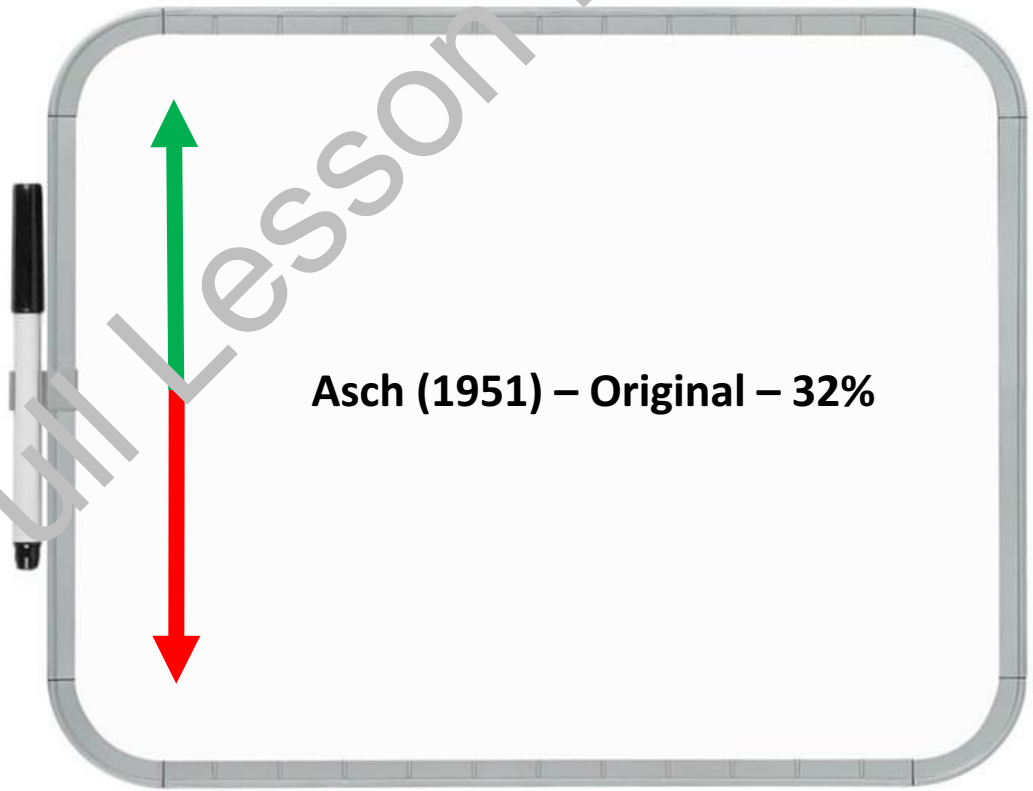
Lesson Objectives:

- To **revise** Asch's (1951) research on conformity.
- To **outline** Asch's (1951) variations and consider the psychological reasons for the differences found.
- To **evaluate** Asch (1951) using the burger technique.

- In Asch's original research he found an overall conformity rate on critical trials of 32%. Since 1951, numerous studies have been conducted looking at different effects of conformity.

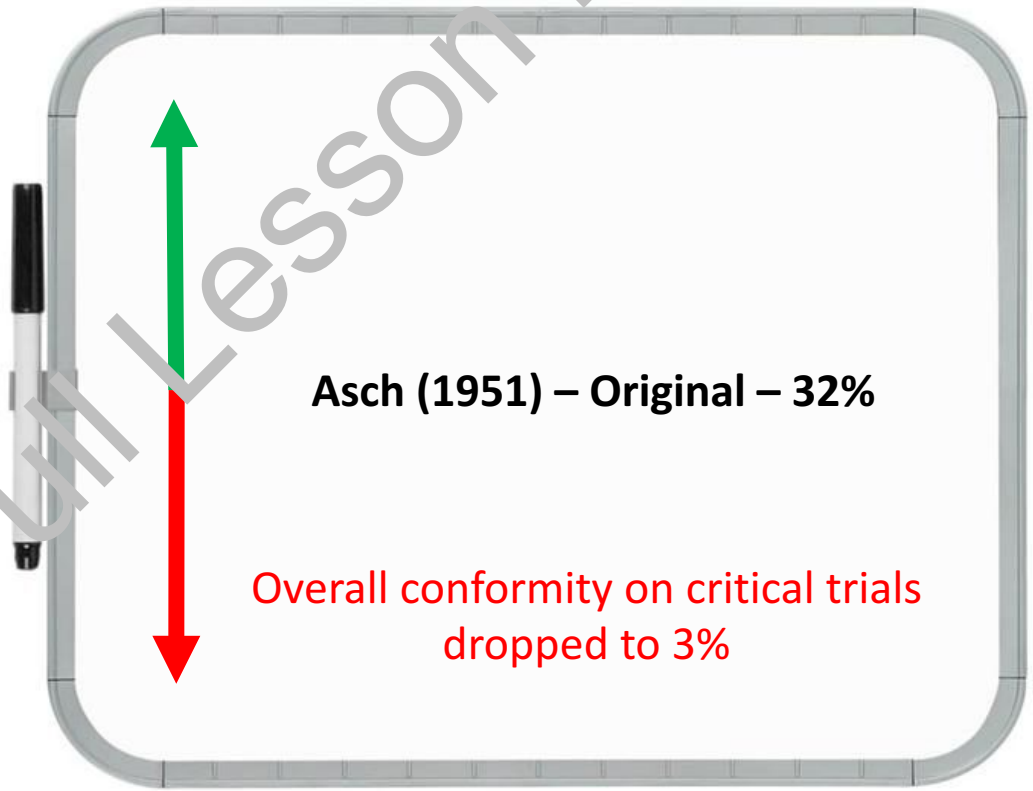
Task: You will now be given different variations of Asch's research.

Your task is write on a mini-whiteboard whether you think conformity rate is higher / lower than 32% - you could even try to guess a %...

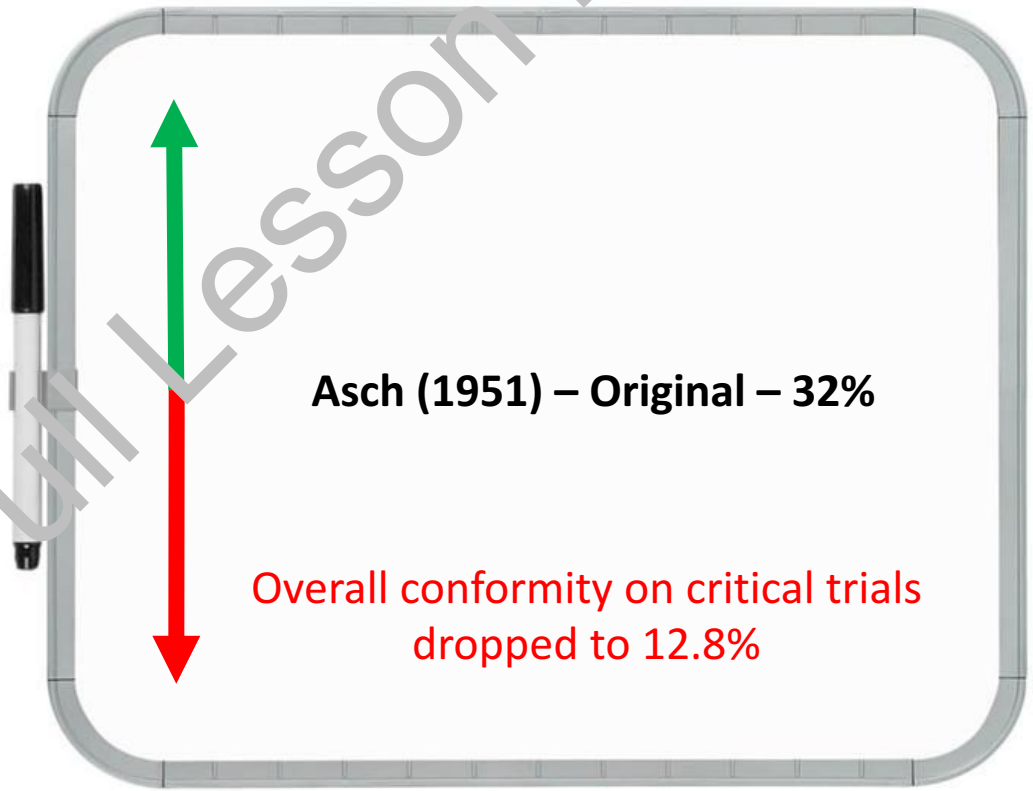


- **Variation 1 Group Size:** In one variation there was only 1 confederate (actor) and 1 real participant. Do you think overall conformity on critical trials was higher or lower than 32%? Why?

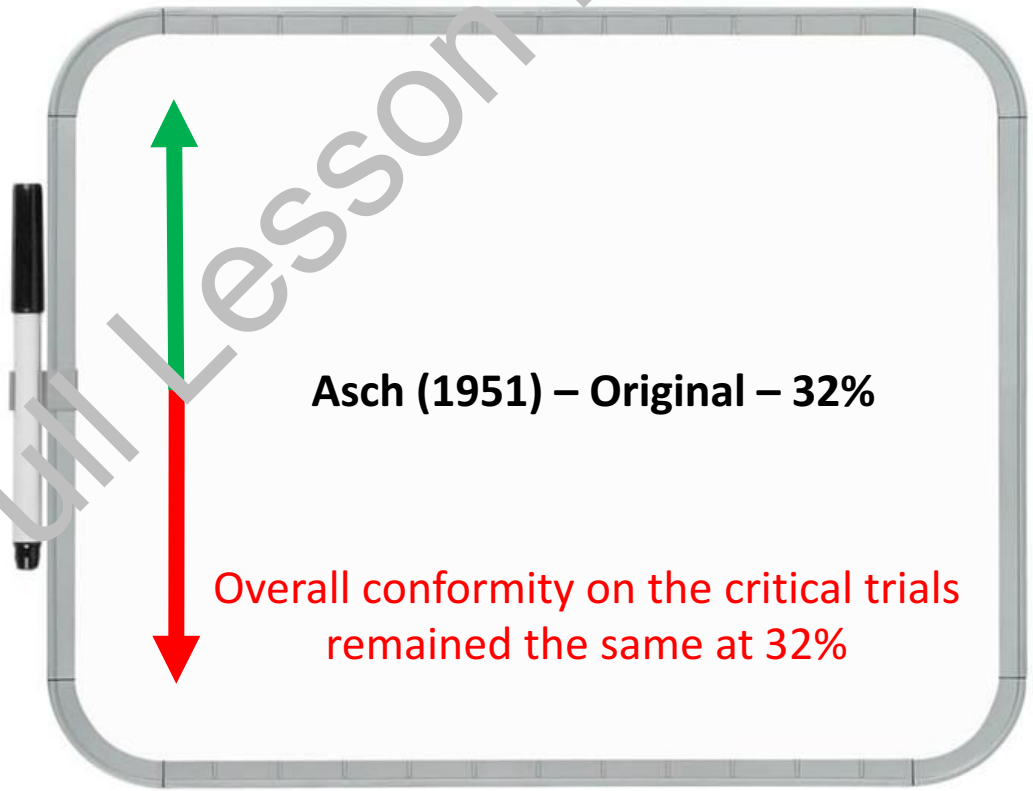
However, it could be argued that this is NOT an example of social influence or majority influence.



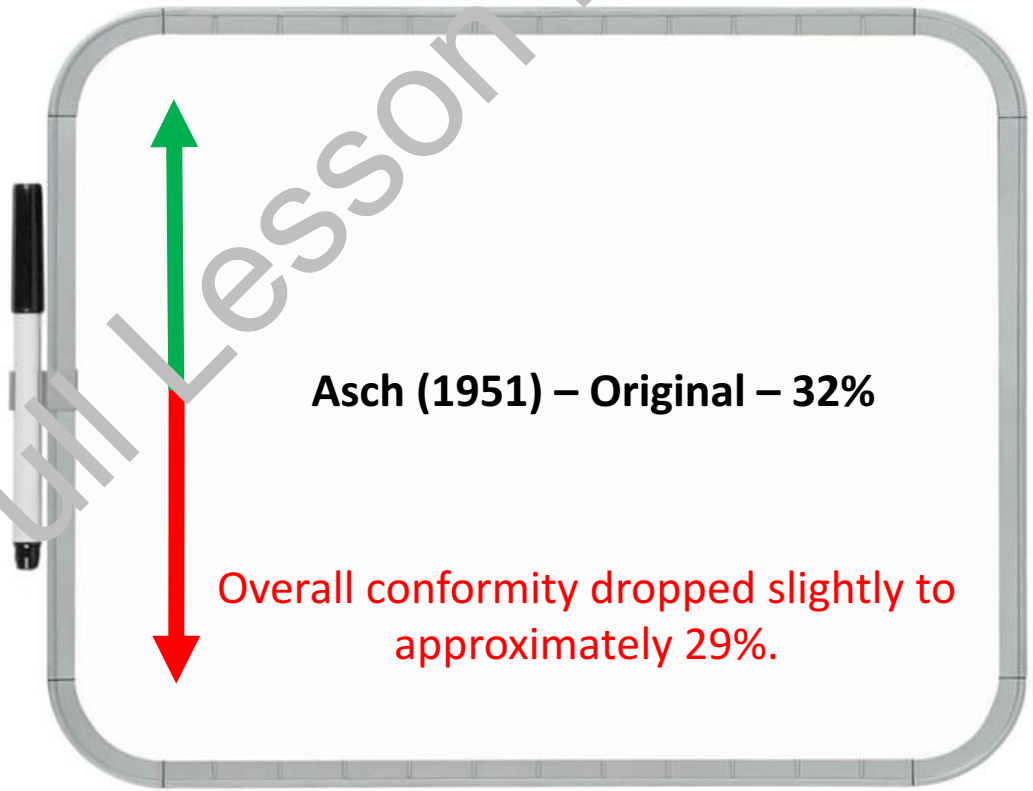
- **Variation 2 Group Size:** In one variation there were 2 confederates (actor) and 1 real participant. Do you think overall conformity on critical trials was higher or lower than 32%? Why?



- **Variation 3 Group Size:** In one variation there were three confederates (actor) and 1 real participant. Do you think overall conformity on critical trials was higher or lower than 32%? Why?

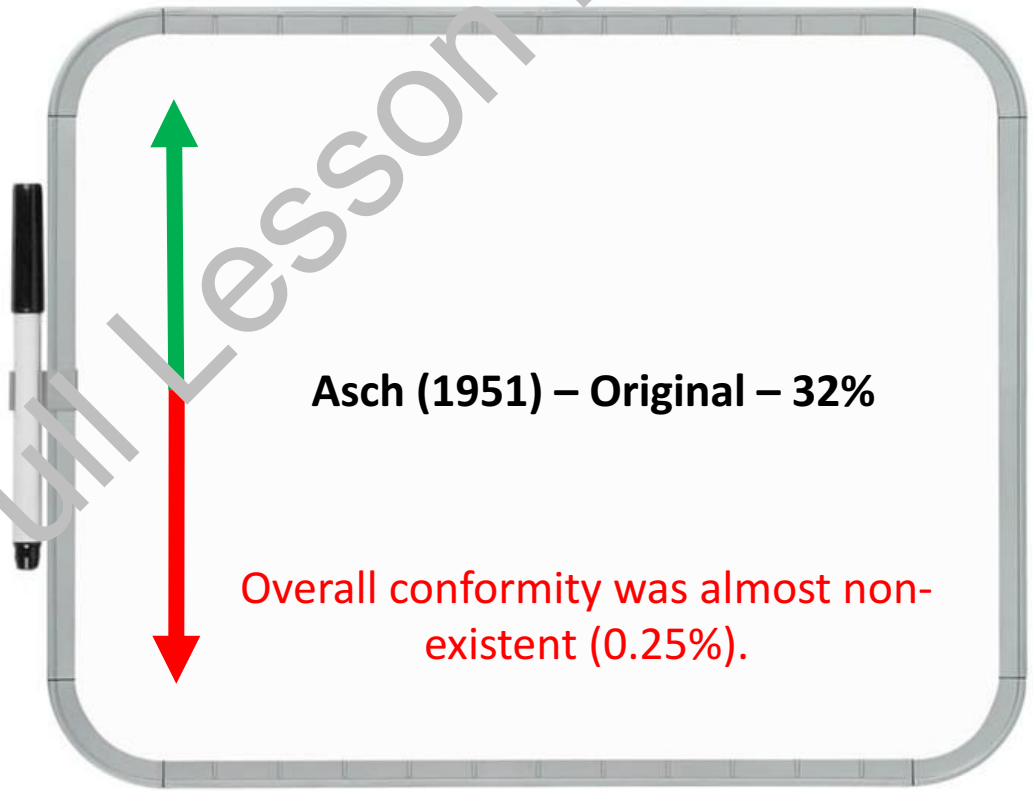


- **Variation 4 Group Size:** In one variation there were 15 confederates (actor) and 1 real participant. Do you think overall conformity on critical trials was higher or lower than 32%? Why?



- **Variation 5 Historical Context/Expertise:** Perrin & Spencer (1981) replicated the Asch study 30 years later, with 33 male students who were studying engineering, chemistry or mathematics.

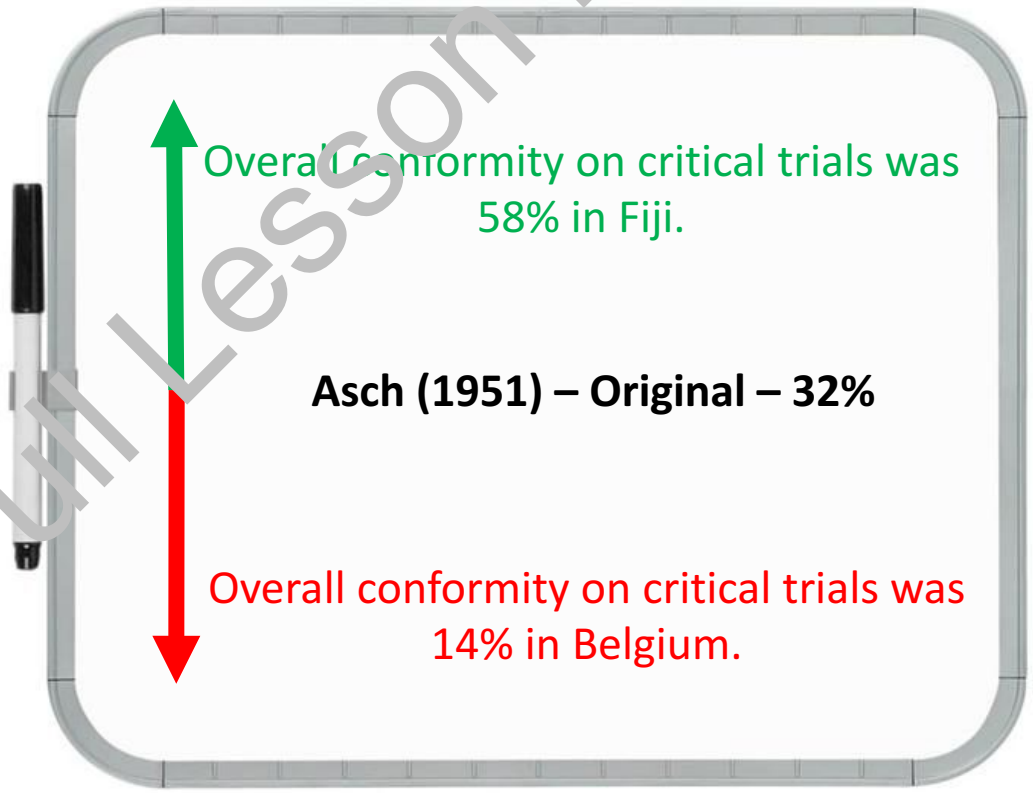
Question: Do you think that this is because the experiment took place 30 years later, or do you think it's because of the type of students taking part?



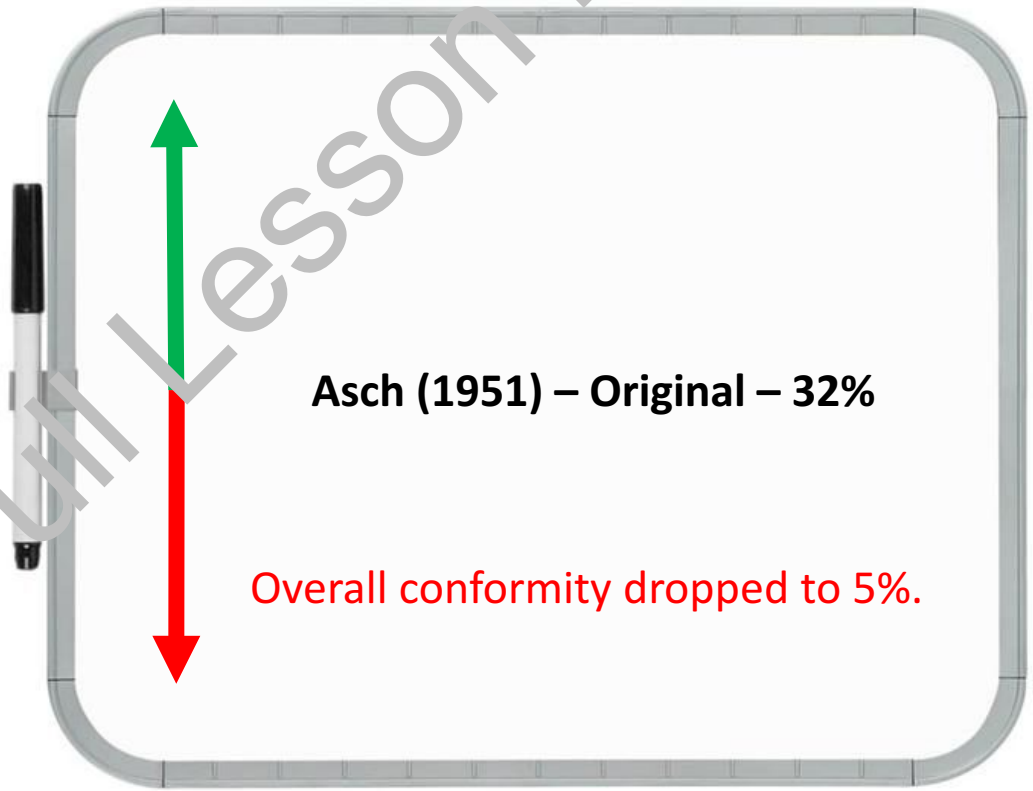
- **Variation 6 Culture:** Smith & Bond (1993) conducted a meta-analysis of 31 studies and found two key findings – 1) Fiji, 2) Belgium. What do you think the overall conformity rate on critical trials was in these two countries…

Question: What might cause a difference in the conformity rates between different countries?

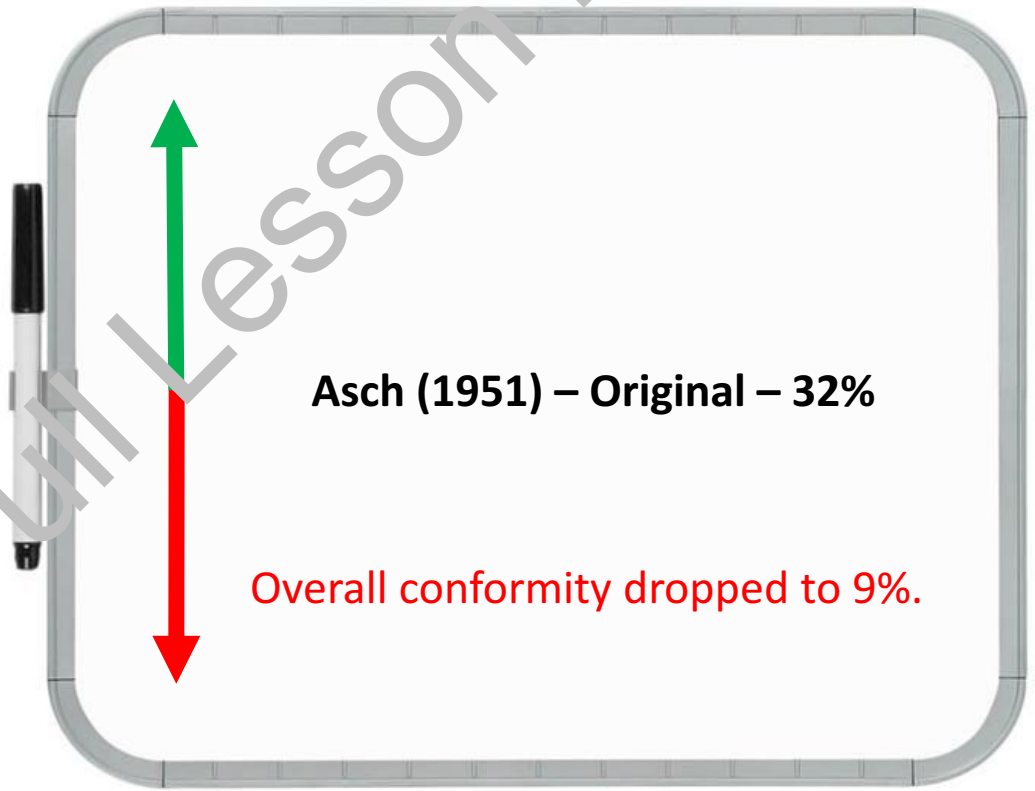
HINT: Think cultural variations of attachment…



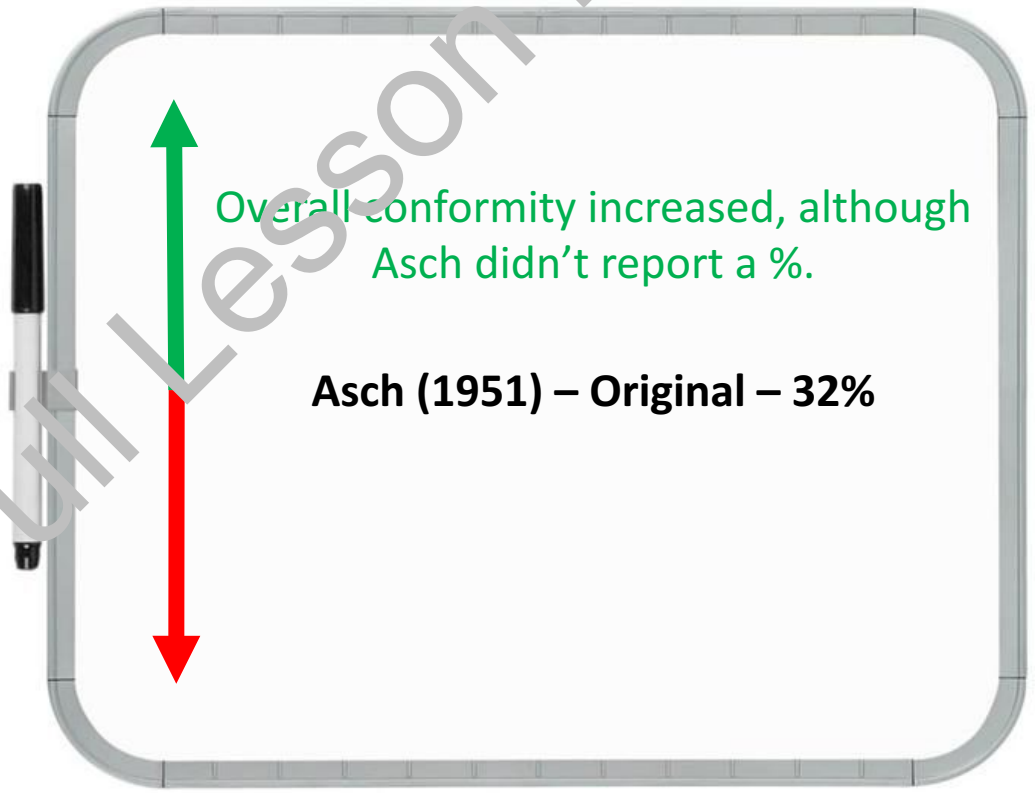
- **Variation 7 Unanimity:** In one variation, one other confederate (actor), out of the 7, gave the correct answer on the critical trials.



- **Variation 8 Unanimity:** In one variation, one other confederate (actor), out of the 7, gave a different incorrect answer to the majority.



- **Variation 9 Task Difficulty:** In one variation, the task was made significantly more difficult, by making the different between the line lengths significantly smaller.



Asch's Variations

- **Task: Complete the following table on your handout and state whether each variation is higher/lower than Asch's (1951) original and the %...if you can remember.**

[illegible]ation	Overall conformity on critical trials (higher/lower) and % (if applicable)
Group Si[illegible] Confederate	
Gr[illegible]nfederates	
G[illegible] 3 Confederates	
Gro[illegible]: 15 Confederates	
H[illegible]torical Context/Expertise: Perrin & Spencer (1981)	
Culture: Meta-analysis by Smith & Bond - Fiji	
Culture: Meta-analysis by Smith & Bond - Belgium	
Unanimity – Where one of the confederates gave the correct answer throughout.	
Unanimity – Where one of the confederates gave a different incorrect answer to the majority.	
Task Difficulty – Where the task was made significantly more difficult, by making the different between the line lengths [illegible]ificantly smaller.	

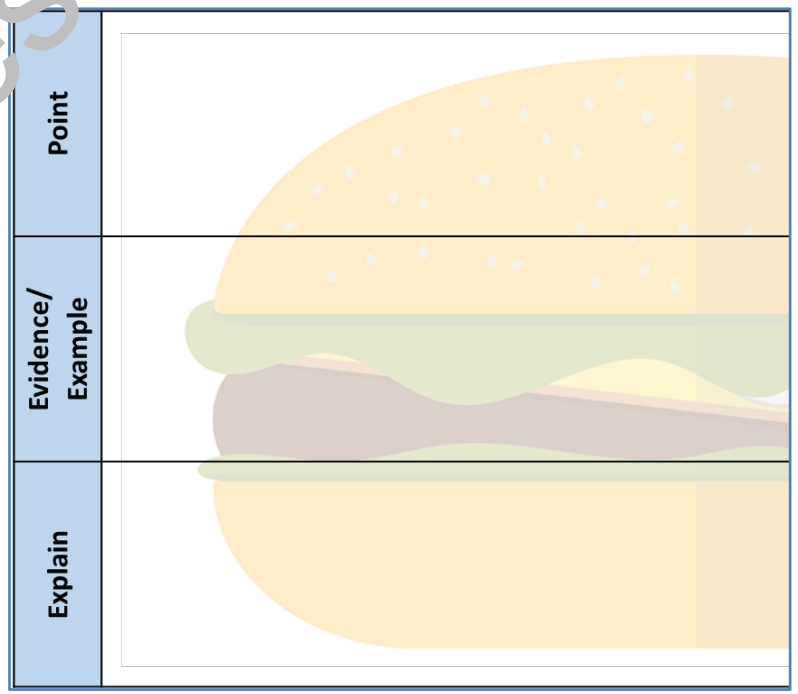
Variation	Overall conformity on critical trials (higher/lower) and % (if applicable)
Group Size: 1 Confederate	
Group Size: 2 Confederates	
Group Size: 3 Confederates	
Group Size: 15 Confederates	
Historical Context/Expertise: Perrin & Spencer (1981)	
Culture: Meta-analysis by Smith & Bond - Fiji	
Culture: Meta-analysis by Smith & Bond - Belgium	
Unanimity – Where one of the confederates gave the correct answer throughout.	
Unanimity – Where one of the confederates gave a different incorrect answer to the majority.	
Task Difficulty – Where the task was made significantly more difficult, by making the different between the line lengths significantly smaller.	

Variation	Overall conformity on critical trials (higher/lower) and % (if applicable)
Group Size: 1 Confederate	**Lower (3%)**
Group Size: 2 Confederates	**Lower (12.8%)**
Group Size: 3 Confederates	**Remained the same (32%**
Group Size: 15 Confederates	**Lower (29%)**
Historical Context/Expertise: Perrin & Spencer (1981)	**0.25%**
Culture: Meta-analysis by Smith & Bond - Fiji	**58%**
Culture: Meta-analysis by Smith & Bond - Belgium	**15%**
Unanimity – Where one of the confederates gave the correct answer throughout.	**5%**
Unanimity – Where one of the confederates gave a different incorrect answer to the majority.	**9%**
Task Difficulty – Where the task was made significantly more difficult, by making the different between the line lengths significantly smaller.	**Increased.**

The Burger Technique

- **Task: You will now be given 9 statements. Cut the statements out and arrange the statements into three burger paragraphs for Asch's study on conformity.**

Asch did not fully adhere to the code of **ethics**.
In the experiment he used an artificial task to measure conformity - judging line lengths. Judging line lengths is a task that most people would not normally do in their everyday lives.
All the participants were American male university students who all belonged to the same sex, age group and occupation.
Participants were not protected from **psychological harm** as they may have been stressed when they disagreed with the majority. Asch **deceived** the student volunteers claiming they were taking part in a 'vision' test; the real purpose was to see how the 'naive' participant would conform to the behavior of the confederates.



The Burger Technique

Point	THE TOP BUN: Asch did not fully adhere to the **code of ethics.**
Evidence/ Example	THE MEAT: Participants were not **protected from psychological harm** as they may have been stressed when they disagreed with the majority. Asch **deceived** the student volunteers claiming they were taking part in a 'vision' test; the real purpose was to see how the 'naive' participant would conform to the behaviour of the confederates.
Explain	THE BOTTOM BUN: This is a problem because he was not respecting his participants who had offered to take part in his research, however, deception was necessary to produce valid results.

The Burger Technique

Point	THE TOP BUN: Another limitation of Asch is his study has **low ecological validity.**
Evidence/ Example	THE MEAT: In the experiment he used an artificial task to measure conformity - judging line lengths. Judging line lengths is a task that most people would not normally do in their everyday lives.
Explain	THE BOTTOM BUN: This is a problem because the results cannot be **generalized** to other real life situations of conformity. If his study was done using a 'real life' situation/task, he may have got different results.

The Burger Technique

Point	THE TOP BUN: One limitation of the study is that is used a biased sample.
Evidence/ Example	THE MEAT: Apply your evaluation point to your study. All the participants were American male university students who all belonged to the same sex, age group and occupation.
Explain	THE BOTTOM BUN: This means that study lacks population validity and that the results cannot be generalized to females or older groups of people.

The Burger Technique

Task: Now look at your completed burgers. Could you improve any of the evaluation point:

1. Is the evidence/example fully explained?

2. Does the explanation (the bottom bun) really say why the evaluation is a strength or limitation?

3. Do you disagree with any of the evaluation points and could you write a counter-argument?

Point	THE TOP BUN: Asch did not fully adhere to the **code of ethics.**
Evidence/ Example	THE MEAT: Participants were not **protected from psychological harm** as they may have been stressed when they disagreed with the majority. Asch **deceived** the student volunteers claiming they were taking part in a 'vision' test; the real purpose was to see how the 'naive' participant would conform to the behaviour of the confederates.
Explain	THE BOTTOM BUN: This is a problem because he was not respecting his participants who had offered to take part in his research, however, deception was necessary to produce valid results.

Homework

- **Homework: Prepare the following essay for next lesson:**

Outline and evaluate research into conformity. (Total 12 marks)

- You will have 15 minutes at the start of next lesson to write this essay.

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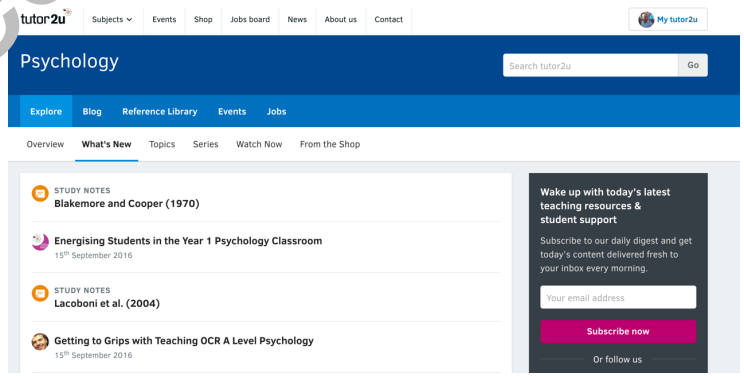

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Point	
Evidence/ Example	
Explain	

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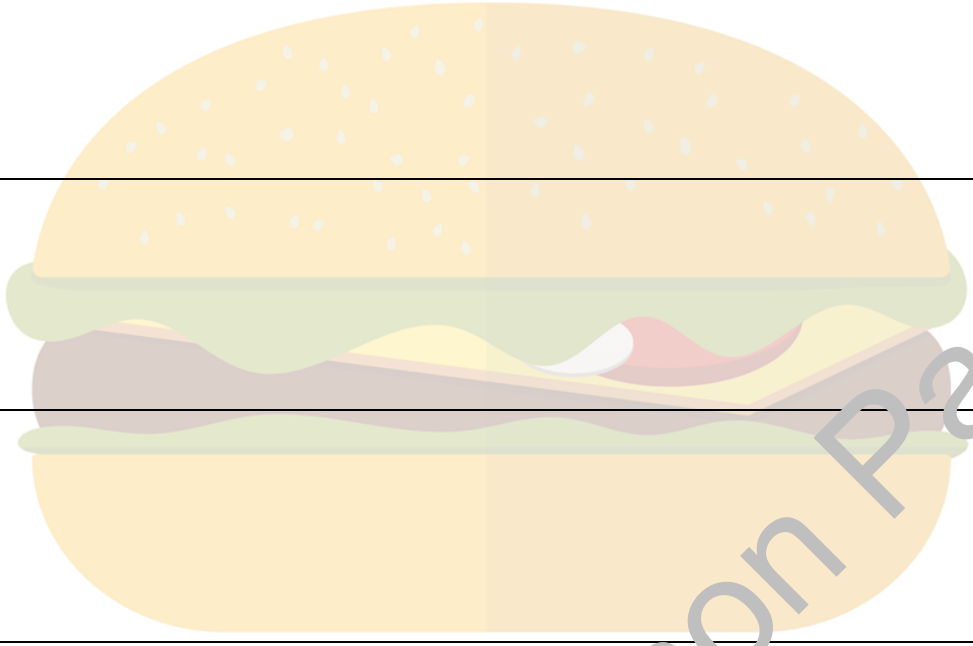

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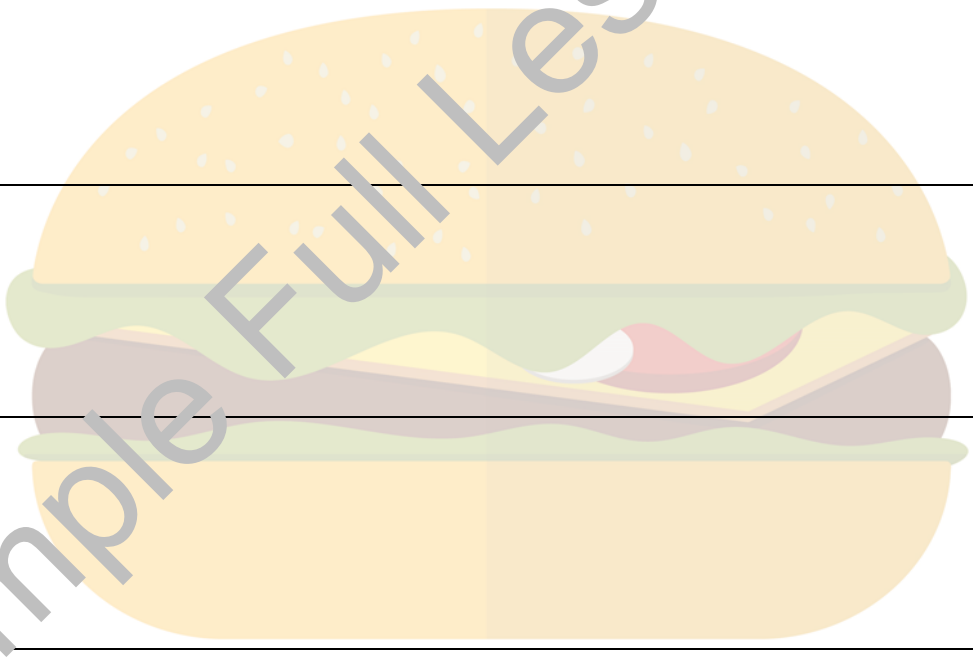

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Another limitation of Asch is his study has **low ecological validity**.
This is a problem because the results cannot be **generalized** to other real life situations of conformity. If his study was done using a 'real life' situation/task, he may have got different results.
This means that study lacks **population validity** and that the results cannot be **generalized** to females or older groups of people.
One limitation of the study is that is used a **biased sample**.
This is a problem because he was not respecting his participants who had offered to take part in his research, however, deception was necessary to produce **valid** results.