

Independent Conformity.

Jenness was the first person to study conformity, his experiment involved a glass bottle filled with beans. He asked people individually to estimate how many beans the bottle contained, then put the group in a room with the bottle, and asked them to provide a group estimate. He then interviewed the subjects individually again, and asked if they would like to change their original estimates, or stay with the group's estimate. Almost all changed their individual guesses to be closer to the group estimate.

The aim of my study is to see if individual estimates are influenced by the estimates of others. The independent variable of this study is what estimates the participants see, either condition A or condition B (High estimates or Low estimates). The dependant variable of this study is whether or not the independent variable affects what the participants estimate.

I predict that the independent variable will affect what the participants estimate in the following ways:

- If the participants see the High estimates, their estimates will be higher.

The High- fake estimate sheet will consist of 5 fake estimates: 700, 670, 800, 731, and 950.

- If the participants see the Low estimates, their estimates will be lower.

The Low- fake estimate sheet will consist of 5 fake estimates: 400, 470, 550, 342, and 535.

I will also create 5 estimate sheets with no estimates on, to compare the above results too.

For this study I will use the experimental method, this will give me more control on everything my participants do. My study will also have the independent group design this means that one group will write their estimates on a high answer sheet, one group on a low answer sheet and the other group on a sheet with no answers. I chose this design to avoid order effects, this design means that each group will only go through one condition, one group will go

through the high estimate answer sheet condition, one group through the low estimate answer sheet condition and the other through the controlled answer sheet condition. This design also means that the participant only sees one answer sheet, if they saw both they would realise the sheets were fixed. The independent variable for this study is whether the participants see either the high or low estimate answer sheets. The dependant variable of this study is how or if the independent variable affects what the participants would estimate.

My target population was widely ranged, 10 friends from my rugby club and 5 family members participated in this study. In brief my sampling method was to collect the estimates of 15 participants and record them into a table. 10 of my participants were all male and 15 at the date I collected the information. The other 5 were age: 15, 19, 25, 29, and 30 and were females.

Here's a full list of the apparatus I used for this study:

- A jar full of drawing pins for the participant to make their estimate with.
- 15 answer sheets, the 2 sets of 5 were both similar, one set has all the same fake high estimates and the other has all the same fake low estimates. The other 5 answer sheets consisted of no answers and the participants were told that they were the first asked in this study. (shown in appendix 1)
- A table which I completed by extracting the participants estimate from each sheet (shown in appendix 2).

For this study I asked the participants if they would like to take place in my study and fortunately all of my chosen participants agreed to do this. Once I give them an answer sheet of either condition, I asked them to estimate how many drawing pins there were in the jar. Once each participant wrote down their estimate I debriefed them about my study and told them what I was experimenting, then I asked if they would still like to participate in the study. Fortunately all of my chosen participants agreed to take part in my study after the debrief I gave them all. I then recorded all the estimates in a table that can be viewed in my appendices. For this procedure this is what was said to each participant:

- Hello, would you like to take place in my study based on conformity?

(Show them the jar)

- Could you please estimate how many drawing pins are in this jar?

(Give them one of the answer sheets)

- Could you write down your estimate in the space below please?

(Collect the answer sheet of the person)

- The answer sheet you have been given was a condition (A or B) answer sheet, this answer sheet had (high or low) fake estimates written on it. The study you just took place in was to discover if your estimate was affected by seeing other estimates. Your estimate will go towards a report for a piece of psychology coursework and compared with another 14 peoples estimates.
- Would you still like to participate?
- Thank you for your time.

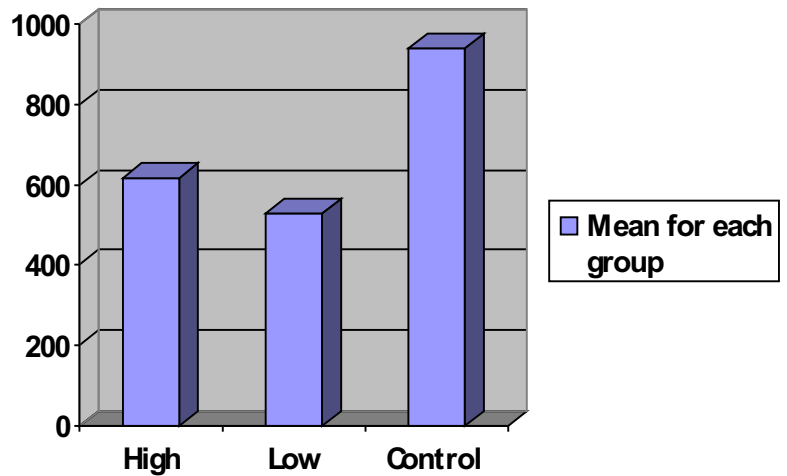
The participants in my study were treated ethically in the following ways: I asked them first politely if they would take part in my study. After they took part in my study I told them the whole truth about what I was experimenting and what would happen to their estimates and asked them once again if they would still like to participate after my debriefing.

Once I collected all the raw data I put it into a table and that table into an appendix. In my appendix I have used this table full of raw data to calculate the data's Mean, Median and Range. This means that the participant estimates can be seen for all conditions and compared.

Comparison:

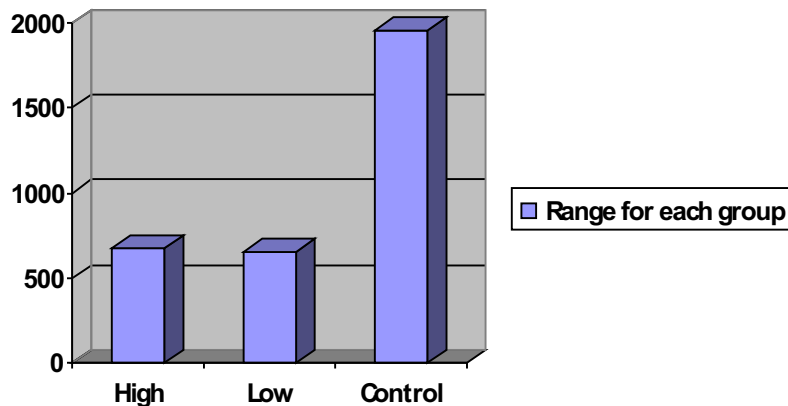
	Mean	Median	Range
Condition A	617.8	510	671
Condition B	529	650	649
Controlled	938.6	450	1957

The Bar chart on right shows the mean averages of the High, Low and Controlled estimate groups.



I did not expect that the results from the “control” group would show the highest estimates and I cannot provide any possible logical explanations for this outline. I did however hypothesize that the “high” group would be of a greater average than the “low” group.

This, second bar chart now shows the Ranges of the 3 groups.



The chart shows that the ranges of the High and Low groups differ greatly from the range of the Control group, this appears to show that the High and Low groups conformed and therefore forced the participant's estimates to be more similar and that the independent variable did indeed influence the dependant variable. This confirms my hypothesis.

From my data I have found that the mean of High group is much larger than the mean of Low group and that the ranges of the participants and the controls differ greatly, and have interpreted these results to mean that the independent variable (the “fake” estimates, which were not a present factor for the controls) affected the dependant variable (the participants estimates) proving my hypothesis.

These findings appear to confirm my hypothesis to an extent, as the High group did have a higher mean than the Low group, although the Control group had a far higher mean than either of the participant groups, and I did not predict that.

More evidence for my hypothesis is that the range for the High and Low groups is about the same, but the Control group had a significantly larger range than either of them.

These results seem to reinforce findings by Jenness among others, in the sense that he found that other peoples’ opinions affected the participants’ responses, when evaluating the ambiguous stimulus.

The reason for conformity in this case is likely to be informational social influence; participants had little or no idea how many pins were in the container, which is backed up by the data showing that the controlled estimates had a much wider range.

Possible improvements

If I carried out the experiment again, these are the things that I would change.

- Make both sets of answers have the same range to see if that means participant answers will have a similar range.

- I found that after answering, some participants said that they had studied GCSE psychology themselves, and were aware of the aims of the experiment, and altered their estimates so that they did not appear to be conforming.

This may mean that although there was evidence of conformity in this study, it would have been less prominent than if all the participants had been unaware of my aims during their participation.

To prevent this, I would ask participants in the High and Low groups if they have done a psychology course before, if they have, they would not participate in my experiment.

- Because some of my participants were teammates from a rugby club and members of my family for this study, the sample did not represent the general public, in an ideal situation; I would use people of all ages and backgrounds.

What Do These Findings Mean In Real Life?

The nature of this experiment is quite simplistic; any real life situation where people conform will have more elements in it that may affect a person's behaviour.

However, the concept of informational social influence may explain situations such as when people watch others in an upmarket restaurant to see which piece of cutlery they are using to eat a particular type of food and copy them so that they do not look odd because they used a fish fork to eat cake, for example.

Appendix 1:

5x High- fake estimate sheets

5x Low- fake estimate sheets

5x Controlled estimate sheets

Appendix 2:

Results:

High- fake estimates	Low- fake estimates	Controlled
1000	650	450
420	350	1500
510	151	300
767	800	243
392	694	2200

Working out the Mean:

$(1000+420+510+767+392) \div 5 =$ High- fake estimate average

$(650+350+151+800+694) \div 5 =$ Low- fake estimate average

$(450+1500+300+243+2200) \div 5 =$ Controlled average

High- fake estimate average = 617.8

Low- fake estimate average = 529

Controlled average = 938.6

Working out the Median:

High- fake estimates in order = 329, 420, 510, 767, 1000.

Here there are 5 numbers, $(5+1) \div 2 = 3$.

3rd number = 510. Median for High- fake estimates = 510.

Low- fake estimates in order = 151, 350, 650, 694, 800.

Here there are 5 numbers, $(5+1) \div 2 = 3$.

3rd number = 650. Median for Low- fake estimates = 650.

Controlled estimates in order = 243, 300, 450, 1500, 2200.

Here there are 5 numbers, $(5+1) \div 2 = 3$.

3rd number = 450. Median for Controlled estimates = 450.

Working out the Range:

High- fake estimate biggest and smallest integers: 1000, 329.

Range = $1000 - 329$. Range = 671.

Low- fake estimate biggest and smallest integers: 800, 151.

Range = $800 - 151$. Range = 649.

Controlled estimate biggest and smallest integers: 2200, 243.

Range = $2200 - 243$. Range = 1957.

Independent Conformity: Estimation sheet.

Participant 1: _____

Participant 2: _____

Participant 3: _____

Participant 4: _____

Participant 5: _____

Participant 6: _____

Participant 7: _____

Participant 8: _____

Participant 9: _____

Participant 10: _____

