

# Social Pressure Experiment

Maria & James Cho

Before Experiment

# Experiment Object

## Object

- To design and conduct an ethical experiment to test how social pressure works in the real world.

## Main Questions

- “When are people most likely to conform?”, “What factors make conformity more likely to occur?”
  - Manipulate the situation to make someone conform to the group
- That leads to the question, “What factors allow social norms to be changed without negative consequences?”
  - Manipulate the situation to make them break the social norm

Constructed two different experiments  
to test both objects  
(in different environment and situation)

# Maria's Experiment



Subject: Sarah Lee (Grade 12)

First, I asked my two friends, Jessy and Kris to participate in my experiment. We four, Sarah, Kris, Jessy and I spend a lot of time together and we were a small social group. Just like I do every day, I asked Jessy and Kris to purchase a tumbler to make coffee and bring it to school everyday for 12 consecutive days.

Then until the 29th of Nov, I observed Sarah's process of following us on buying a tumbler and bringing in coffee or other drinks.

I chose this experiment to see how nearby friends are impactful to each other when it comes to being feel like their left out alone. At ordinary times, my friends expressed their feeling of jealous when I bring coffee to school every single day, so I created this experiment to perform a pressure on following this action in social group.

# James' Experiment



Jay Kim, who conformed (changed the social norm) almost everyday & Jay Sung, who took some time to conform

I interviewed them after the experiment

## Subject

- The social group that I am in (Peer group)

## Procedure

- We always eat the menu that has a shorter line regardless of the menu.
  - I will start to eat the menu that has a longer line to see if my friends will follow me.  
→ Eating the menu with a shorter line (social norm) / Will they change the social norm?
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# Hypothesis

Maria's

If all of her group members bring coffee in their tumbler to school every day except her, she will soon follow the action because she will feel like she is left out alone.

James'

If I start to eat the lunch menu that has a longer line and tell them to do so, then my friends will also start to eat the same menu that I eat.

# Experiment Predictions

Do you think your experiment is ethical? Why or why not?

What do you think the results might teach us about human behavior?

We tried to create an experiment that is ethical by actually **avoiding physical interaction and emotionally harmful pressures**. Both of the experiments happened among our social group which means it was a **non-pressured and comfortable environment for the subjects** to be tested. Even though the subjects weren't notified about the experiment, there weren't any unusual things nor sudden changes, so the subjects were able to show their change in behavior naturally.

The result will teach us which factor or behavior from nearby **peers can be such impactful to alter their habits and personal behaviors**.

During Experiment



# Challenges

Maria

- This experiment works properly when we all go to school at the same time or have lunch all together, but sometimes unexpected things happened such as **one not showing up to school or not having lunch**.

James

- It was hard to grab my friends' attention since **we don't care about what do we eat or where do we go** (Milo knows it).
- There might be a situation **where I cannot meet friends or be in the peer group**, but that situation didn't happen, fortunately.
- Even though we usually don't care about the menu and care about the length of the line, we sometimes care about the "delicious menu", like when hamburgers were sold in the cafeteria

# Data (Maria)

Week 1						
Days	1	2	3	4	5	6
Change	x	x	o	x	o	o
Week 2						
Days	7	8	9	10	11	12
Change	o	o	o	x	o	o

The observation went on for 12 days, including the weekends. “O” represents a sign that Sarah showed some kind of a sign(indication) or an actual change in her habit and behavior. I had to observe every actions that she do every morning and also outside campus to catch her buying coffee or tumbler.

# Analysis (Maria)

On day 3, she asked me if she could borrow a tumbler that I wasn't using (she knows that I have several different tumblers that I own). I lend her one of my Starbucks tumblers and asked her why she would want a tumbler. Then, Sarah answered that she also wanted to drink coffee and carry around at school for water.

After that, starting from day 5, she made instant coffee in the morning and brought it to school. Thus, on that day at school, all four of us had our own tumbler! Sarah had one day she seemed to forget to bring her coffee to school, but other than that, she is still continuing to bring her tumbler every day.

My hypothesis was partially correct. I expect the change to appear later (at around 6-7 days after), but Sarah's reaction came earlier. I realized that feeling left out can be a small pressure to change certain behavior and also learned that nearby friend's actions are really impactful.

# Data (James)

- November 18 ~ November 27
- Total 10 days
- I went to the menu with the longer line every day
- Form of peer pressures
  - Verbal
    - Talking to them
    - Urging them
- Reactions of subject
  - Following me
  - Not following me

# Data (James)

	<b>11/18</b>	<b>11/19</b>	<b>11/20</b>	<b>11/21</b>	<b>11/22</b>
<b>People in the group</b>	5	4	5	5	2
<b>People who conformed/followed</b>	1	2	1	3	0
<b>Notes</b>	The person who conformed complained to me a lot			Senior Committee sold hamburger/Line for hamburgers was short	MUN day - Fewer people in the group

# Data (James)

	11/23	11/24	11/25	11/26	11/27
People in the group	6	6	5	4	5
People who conformed	2	3	4	4	3
Notes			Most of the group member followed me	Everyone followed me!	

# Analysis (James)

## First week

- Not many takeaways
  - The menu that attracted peers was manipulating my peer pressure - hamburgers
  - MUN - not many people in the group

## Second week

- The pattern
  - People who followed me increased as time went
    - Monday/1 - Tuesday/2 - Wednesday/3
    - Maybe because there were more people who followed me
      - That probably became the social norm to follow me/go to the longer line

Hypothesis - "If I start to eat the lunch menu that has a longer line and tell them to do so, then my friends will also start to eat the same menu that I eat."

- The hypothesis was right; my friends started to go to the menu and the line that I was in even though the line was the longer one.

After Experiment



# Interview (Maria)



Kris Chung (Grade 12)  
Who helped out with the experiment (actor)



# Interview (James)



Jay Kim G9

- Conformed every day except 11/27
1. Why did you follow me almost every day?
    - Because you said so... Also, as time went, there were more people who followed you, so I felt comfortable and relieved not to go to the menu with the shorter line.
  2. Any comments?
    - We often go to the menu with the short line, right? But, at some point, I realized that I was with you and some other friends in the very long line. I thought that that was strange and also interesting that the thing that we normally do changed really quickly.



Jay Sung G9

- Conformed after a while
1. Why did you follow me?
    - At first, I didn't notice that you went to the menu with the longer line. However, at some point, I saw many friends with you in the longer line, so I went to you.
  2. So you followed me because there were many friends with me?
    - Yes. I thought like that became some kind of rule among my friends. Also, I didn't want to be excluded from the friend group.

# Reflection

The experiment was successful because...

- We could pull off the clear conclusion from the experiment and data
  - Our hypothesis/predictions were right

However, when we do this project again, we can

- Try with something that has clearer causes & effects
  - ex) For James' experiment, the changes that his friends made were not because of the peer pressure that James made. Maybe because of the food, preference, or something that cannot be manipulated
- Try to have more variables to measure so that we can get more results from the experiment
  - The initial idea of having 2 experiments was to compare & contrast the data, but the data was not sufficient and appropriate to compare/contrast.

# Conclusion

“When are people most likely to conform?”, “What factors make conformity more likely to occur?”

- The subject of the experiment, Sarah Lee, **made a change in her habit** which is bringing in her tumbler to school to have coffee every morning. Since all of her friends were already doing this action for a few days, she wanted to **follow the group to conform**. I found out that the conformity is more likely to occur when **she was feeling left out** because she was the only one who didn't own a tumbler to bring it to school. Before the experiment began, I was the only one, but since everybody in our group started to do this action she was feeling pressured to follow.

“What factors allow social norms to be changed without negative consequences?”

- **One fluctuation in the group** → Many fluctuations in the group, which become some form of social norm → Original social norms are changed without negative consequences
- **Not intense peer pressure** makes people conform positively → Many fluctuations in the group, which become some form of social norm → Original social norms are changed without negative consequences