Reapplication of the Asch Paradigm

Psychology Lab Experiment

Andrew Crediford B1

24 February 2017

Mr. O’Hara

IB Psychology SL

Word count: 1330
Table of Contents

Page 1: Abstract, Introduction
Page 2: Introduction. Method
Page 3: Method
Page 4: Results, Discussion
Page 5: References
Page 6: Appendices
Page 7: Appendices
Abstract: The aim of the study that we performed was to determine the effect that being in a social group has on the level of a person’s conformity. To start off the experiment, my partner and I first decided how we would perform the experiment. We decided to get 7 people each trial to be the fake subjects, their job was to say wrong answers to a question that was relatively easy to answer. Once they all answered, we would test to see if the real subject (who we also selected) would either conform to the wrong answers, or give the correct answer. Our results were that 5 out of the 7 subjects did not conform, leading us to the conclusion that today, people are not conforming like they did in the 1950’s when the original experiment was conducted.

Introduction: Asch (1951) conducted one of the most famous laboratory experiments examining conformity. His aim was to examine the extent to which social pressure from a majority, could affect a person to conform. His procedure started by getting 50 male students from Swarthmore College in America, who believed they were taking part in a vision test. He then used a line judgement task, where he placed on real naïve participants in a room with seven confederates (actors), who had agreed their answers in advance. The real participant was deceived and was led to believe that the other seven people were also real participants. The real participant always sat second to last. In turn, each person had to say out loud which line (A, B or C) was most like the target line in length. Asch wanted to see if the real participant would conform to the majority view, even when the answer was clearly incorrect. He measured the number of times each participant conformed to the majority view. On average, the real participants conformed to the incorrect answers on 32% of the critical trials. 74% of the participants conformed on at least one
critical trial and 26% of the participants never conformed. Asch also used a control group, in which one real participant completed the same experiment without any confederates. He found that less than 1% of the participants gave an incorrect answer. Asch interviewed his participants after the experiment to find out why they conformed. Most of the participants said that they knew their answers were incorrect, but they went along with the group in order to fit in, or because they thought they would be ridiculed. This confirms that participants conformed due to normative social influence and the desire to fit in.

Our experiment had the same aim and procedure as Asch’s experiment. However, the results were a bit different. In Asch’s experiment, 74% of the subjects conformed, however, in our experiment, only 2 out of the 7 subjects conformed to the group’s answers. The reason as to why these results were this way will be discussed in the Discussion section of this paper.

**Method:**

**Design:** The experimental method that we used was a controlled laboratory experiment. We decided that it would be best to sample our own confederates, as well as, our own subjects. We thought this would be best so that we could get the best results. In our experiment, deception was used in order to legitimize the results. It was used on the subjects because they did not know that the confederates were really faking their results. Also, this experiment did not break any ethical considerations, and to ensure that we also made our own ethics statement that we made all our confederates and subjects sign. Finally, the independent variable was the amount of people in the group, and whether they gave the correct answer or not, and the dependent variable was the level of conformity.
Participants: As recommended, we used around 10 participants. We used 7 confederates and 1 or 2 subjects per each trial. For our confederates, we used 3 guys and four girls. For our subjects, 3 were guys and four were girls. All of the confederates were from Conner’s SRT class, and all of the subjects were picked from different SRTs around the school (particularly younger than a senior).

Materials: There weren’t that many materials that were used in the overall experiment. It was conducted in a quiet hallway, so we had all of the people in the experiment stand up. Also, we used a computer screen as a way to display the line test, and we just passed around the computer whenever someone had to give their answer. We did use paper for all of the ethics sheets, and gave the people a pen to sign their name. Other than that, there weren’t many materials used for the experiment.

Procedures: First, we picked 7 seniors from Conner’s SRT to be used as confederates for all of our trials during this experiment. Next, we walked into the 3 classrooms in the high school and pick one underclassman per trial to be used as the subject. Then we asked the students to sign our permission slips so we are able to use the data we recorded for our project. After that, we explained to the confederates what to do and how to act while the questions are being asked. Next, we brought the students together to the classroom and have them sit in the desks. Then we showed a PowerPoint that gave a multiple choice line test where the students have to identify the line most similar to the target line. After that, we asked for answers person by person out loud by show of hand. Next, we observed and recorded the student’s answers. Finally, we explained the experiment to them, and then conducted it.
**Results:** To start off, our results were that 2 students conformed to the group, and 5 did not conform. This means that only 29% of the subjects conformed to the group, which is quite the opposite compared to the results in Asch’s experiment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student 1</th>
<th>Student 2</th>
<th>Student 3</th>
<th>Student 4</th>
<th>Student 5</th>
<th>Student 6</th>
<th>Student 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conform</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Discussion:** Going back to the results in the study that we conducted, 29% of subjects conformed to the group, compared to Asch’s 74% in the original experiment. Asch’s conclusion for his results were that participants conformed due to normative social influence and the desire to fit in. However, our results were quite the opposite of Asch’s results, showing that the normative desire to fit in is just not as relevant as it used to be, although there is still some relevancy. Our procedures were pretty much a replica of Asch’s, however our sample size was much shorter. Our sample size was 7 students, compared to his 50 students. This disparity in the number of subjects could be a reason why the results were very off. However, a decent change in sample size should not result in a 45% shift in the results, meaning that there is some other reasoning behind this result change. We think it goes back to the disappearance of the normative desire to fit in.

**References:**


Asch Experiment. (n.d.). Retrieved February 01, 2017, from
Reapplication of the Asch Paradigm

https://explorable.com/asch-experiment


Appendices:

This is an image of the exact test that Asch used on his subjects. This can be used in order to further replicate his experiment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Student 1</th>
<th>Student 2</th>
<th>Student 3</th>
<th>Student 4</th>
<th>Student 5</th>
<th>Student 6</th>
<th>Student 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conform</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ethics Statement

Informed Consent

- We will inform the participants about the nature of the study and they will have the option to agree to participate

Deception

- Deception will not be used which will not cause stress to the individuals
- If any slight deception is used, we will explain at the end of the study

Debriefing

- The true aim and purpose of the study will be revealed to the participants
Withdrawal from a Study

- At the beginning of any study, participants have the right to leave the study at any time and withdraw their data at the end of the study

Confidentiality

- All information that is obtained in the study will be confidential

Protection from Physical or Mental Harm

- No harm will be done to participants
- It is not permitted to humiliate or force a participant to reveal private information