



CALIFORNIA STATE SCIENCE FAIR 2002 PROJECT SUMMARY

Name(s) Sara E.B. Heaps	Project Number J1708
Project Title PEERception or Reality?	
<p style="text-align: center;">Abstract</p> <p>Objectives/Goals The objective of my experiment is to determine which middle school grade- 6th, 7th or 8th- is most influenced by what they perceive as their peers' opinions.</p> <p>Methods/Materials I tested 40 students from each grade (6th, 7th and 8th). To collect data, I preformed a taste test. In each cup I put one tablespoon of Brita filtered water; the cups were labeled #1, #2 and #3. I put the focus of my taste test on identifying different types of water: Mountain, Spring and Purified. At the bottom of the worksheet, I asked which one of the waters they tasted was their favorite.</p> <p>In the Control Group (one of my two groups), I told them that I am looking to see how well middle schoolers can identify different types of water. In the Influenced Group, I told them that a National Survey* said middle schoolers strongly preferred Spring water over any other type of water. I continued on by telling them what I told the Control Group. When my experiment was completed, I calculated the percentage point difference (for each grade) of the people in Control Group who chose spring water as their favorite vs. the people in the Influenced Group that chose spring water as their favorite. *Results not based on a real national survey</p> <p>Results From my data, I concluded that seventh graders were most influenced by what they perceive as their peers' opinion. This was backed up by the results, which showed that the greatest change in the percentage choosing spring water occurred among seventh graders (the difference between the Control Group and the Influenced Group was 30 percentage points). Sixth graders were the second most influenced with a 20-percentage point difference. Eighth graders were the least influenced with a 14-percentage point difference.</p> <p>Conclusions/Discussion When I got the results I did, I was confused because I originally thought that sixth graders would be the most influenced. So, for a few days I observed the students at my school and I discovered that sixth graders stand on their own because they are the newest and youngest. I also observed that seventh graders cling to the eighth graders, wanting to be like them and tend to go along with what the eighth graders want to do. Comments 7th graders made after the experiment (such as: What did you choose?) also lead me to believe 7th graders are the most influenced.</p>	
Summary Statement My project is about the comparative impact of peer influence on each middle school grade.	
Help Received My teachers enabled me to use the school science lab for my experiment; my classmates participated in my experiment; my friend helped set up before each group came; my parents edited my spelling on my project	