

# Alone in a Crowd of Sheep: Asymmetric Perceptions of Conformity and Their Roots in an Introspection Illusion

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The results of 5 studies showed that people see others as more conforming than themselves. This asymmetry was found to occur in domains ranging from consumer purchases to political views. Participants claimed to be less susceptible than their average peers to broad descriptions of social influences, and they also claimed to be less susceptible than specific peers to specific instances of conformity. These studies further demonstrated that this asymmetry is not simply the result of social desirability, but it is also rooted in people's attention to introspective versus behavioral information when making conformity assessments. The participants displayed an *introspection illusion*, placing more weight on introspective evidence of conformity (relative to behavioral evidence) when judging their own susceptibility to social influence as opposed to someone else's. Implications for self–other asymmetries, implicit social influence, and interpersonal conflict are discussed.

*Keywords:* conformity, social influence, self-perception, introspection illusion, actor–observer

It is easy in the world to live after the world's opinion; it is easy in solitude to live after our own; but the great man is he who in the midst of the crowd keeps with perfect sweetness the independence of solitude.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays*

The power of social influence is undeniable. People wear the same styles of clothing as their friends, drive the same cars as their neighbors, vote the same politics as their parents, and read the same books as their favorite celebrities. Social commentators, ranging from playwrights to sociologists, have long lamented people's tendency to conform in their tastes, preferences, aspirations, and behaviors (e.g., Emerson, 1841; Ionesco, 1961; Thoreau, 1850/1906; Whyte, 1956). The study of social influence, and of conformity in particular, is also at the heart of social psychology,

which Gordon Allport (1985) defined as “an attempt to understand and explain how the thoughts, feelings and behaviors of individuals are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others” (p. 3). In fact, many of the classic studies in our field (e.g., Asch, 1956; Latane & Darley, 1968; Milgram, 1974; Newcomb, 1943; Schachter & Singer, 1962; Sherif, 1937) have been about some form of conformity or social influence.

Studies of social influence have demonstrated people's tendency to conform in a wide range of circumstances. People conform in their judgments of both ambiguous stimuli (Sherif, 1936) and unambiguous stimuli (Asch, 1956). They conform on trivial matters, such as their preferences for different types of instant coffee (Burnkrant & Cousineau, 1975), and on more weighty matters, such as their tendency to recycle (Cialdini, 2003). And, people conform to social influence from a wide variety of sources, including people they look up to (Newcomb, 1943), peers they do not personally know (Latané & Darley, 1968), relatively abstract reference groups (Cohen, 2003), and social norms they privately reject (Prentice & Miller, 1996).

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This research was supported in part by research funds from Princeton University provided to Emily Pronin and to Sarah Molouki. Portions of this research were presented at the annual meetings of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology in 2005 (New Orleans, LA) and 2006 (Palm Springs, CA). Our gratitude goes to Tracy Dobie, John Fleming, Elana Jacobs, Lisa Lamb, and Ran Li for research assistance with various aspects of this project and to Dena Gromet and Kathleen Kennedy for serving as raters for Study 3. We thank Deborah Prentice and Vincent Yzerbyt for helpful comments and suggestions about this research.

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## Asymmetric Perceptions of Conformity

Everyday experience and decades of research make clear that instances of conformity are all around us. The contention of the present article, though, is that there is one place where these instances are difficult to see: that is, in ourselves. We predict that when it comes to detecting the impact of social influence, people will see themselves as “alone in a crowd of sheep.”

Although conformity and social influence have been the subject of many studies, few studies have examined *perceptions* of social influence or conformity. However, observations from some existing studies are worthy of note. In their studies demonstrating the

effect of others' inaction on bystander intervention, Latane and Darley (1968) reported that most participants denied (in debriefings) that their behavior had been socially influenced. Similarly, the majority of participants who conformed to group norms in Sherif's (1937) classic autokinetic experiment denied such influence and instead claimed to have formed an opinion before hearing from others in the group. More recently, Cohen (2003) found that participants' support of various domestic policies was powerfully shaped by the purported position of their political party, but they denied that influence (even while recognizing that it would affect the average Democrat or Republican).

Everyday experience also suggests that we may fail to recognize our own susceptibility to social influence. When buying the same pop music album as our friends, or purchasing the same car as our coworker, we rarely think we have succumbed to social influence: We say we bought the album for the band's sound and the car for its superb handling and repair record. Similarly, when hearing about classic experiments on conformity, our students often marvel at how far *people* will go to conform but note that *they* would never act that way in the same situation.

### Sources of the Asymmetry

The opening of this article suggests that conformity is often viewed as undesirable. Indeed, self-serving motives are likely to contribute to people's persistent denials of conformity. We argue, however, that a cognitive process underlying evaluations of conformity also biases those judgments (in a way that is likely to serve self-enhancement needs). Specifically, assessments of conformity can rely on information of two different sorts. They can rely on observable behavior (e.g., *Harold's recent car purchase was clearly conformist since he bought the same car that a number of his coworkers own; Marjorie conforms in her eating habits—she always orders the same entrée as her date*), or they can rely on introspections (*I didn't conform in buying that car because its popularity never crossed my mind; I don't conform in my eating habits—I always order what I think I would enjoy the most*). The proposed cognitive process at the heart of conformity-related assessments involves a different weighting of these two sorts of information when considering self versus others (i.e., with self-assessments being more likely than other-assessments to weight introspective information above behavioral information).

A greater reliance on introspective evidence at the expense of considering behavioral evidence may lead to underestimations of the impact of social influence because such influence often occurs without conscious awareness or intent. People nonconsciously mimic the motor behavior and movements of social interaction partners (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; see also Word, Zanna, & Cooper, 1974), and they nonconsciously adopt their partners' self-presentation styles (Vorauer & Miller, 1997). In addition, people's goal-oriented behaviors are influenced by nonconscious social cues (Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003), and people are more likely to conform to others' behavior after being nonconsciously primed with conformity-related words (Epley & Gilovich, 1999). Furthermore, research on "mere exposure" (Zajonc, 1968) suggests that people will come to like the clothing that those around them wear, and the cars that those around them drive, without realizing that such influence has occurred—and possibly without

even realizing that they have been exposed to the relevant influence (Kunst-Wilson & Zajonc, 1980).

### The Introspection Illusion

To the extent that conformity occurs nonconsciously, evidence for it will necessarily escape introspection. We suggest that one source of the predicted asymmetry in conformity assessments involves an *introspection illusion* (Pronin, Gilovich, & Ross, 2004; Pronin & Kugler, in press), whereby people focus on internal information at the expense of behavioral information in making self-assessments but not other-assessments. Previous research suggests that people show such a tendency. People tend to use information about perceived thoughts, motives, and intentions as a basis for making inferences about their own, but not others', future behaviors, altruistic tendencies, and commissions of bias (Epley & Dunning, 2000; Kruger & Gilovich, 2004; Pronin & Kugler, in press). By contrast, people look to behavior as a basis for inferring other people's, but not their own, intentions and traits (Jones & Davis, 1965; Jones & Nisbett, 1972). Studies directly exploring attention to internal states versus behavior suggest that people view behavior as more revealing of others and internal states as more revealing of the self (Andersen & Ross, 1984; Pronin, Kruger, Savitsky, & Ross, 2001; Pronin & Kugler, in press).

In their classic article on the actor-observer bias, Jones and Nisbett (1972) argued that differences in access to introspective information are a critical source of actor-observer differences in attribution. This argument suggests that if we knew another person's conformity-related introspections (for example, our neighbor's thoughts before deciding to buy that top-of-the-line outdoor barbecue), then our judgments of conformity would resemble that person's. However, the predicted illusion of introspection involves an overweighting of internal states (relative to behavior) that is not entirely the result of increased access to that information but also of increased valuation of it. When assessing the impact of social influence on oneself, one is likely to view introspections as a highly useful source of information and behavioral evidence (e.g., whether others on the block purchased the pricey barbecue first) as a less useful source. By contrast, when assessing the impact of social influence on others, individuals are less likely to privilege thoughts over behavior. Whereas we may feel that knowing our introspections is enough for us to determine whether we have conformed, when it comes to judging our neighbor's conformity, we may feel that knowing his behavior is at least as valuable as knowing his interest in *Consumer Reports'* barbecue ratings, or his exhilaration at grilling the perfect rib-eye steak in the backyard (or his absence of any conscious desire to impress the wealthier families on the block).

### Overview of the Present Research

We predict that people will more readily detect the impact of social influence on others than on themselves. Furthermore, we expect that when making judgments about the impact of social influence on themselves, actors will be inclined, more than observers, to focus on introspective information and neglect behavioral information. In the present studies, we investigate these hypotheses by first seeking to document the predicted self-other asymmetry in perceptions of social influence and also seeking to

rule out the possibility that the asymmetry purely reflects social desirability motives (Studies 1–2). We then seek to test whether the asymmetry is rooted in part in self–other differences in people’s consideration and valuation of introspective versus behavioral information about conformity (Studies 3–5).

### Study 1: Perceptions of Social Influence in Varied Domains

In our initial study, we sought to test the general hypothesis of a self–other asymmetry in perceptions of conformity and social influence. Across a variety of different reference groups and social contexts, we predicted that people would see themselves as less conforming than their peers. This study also began our exploration of underlying mechanism. We examined possible effects of the introspection illusion, and of social desirability or self-enhancement concerns, on denials of personal conformity. We expected that participants would be more inclined to deny their own conformity (relative to their peers’) not only in cases in which such influences were less desirable but also in cases in which those influences were more likely to elude conscious introspection.

#### Method

**Participants.** Forty-four undergraduate students at Princeton University (23 men and 21 women) participated in exchange for course credit.

**Procedure and questionnaire.** Participants’ questionnaire asked them to assess their own susceptibility, compared with the average Princeton student, to 16 examples of conformity (i.e., influence of: conversation partners’ gestures on one’s own gestures, dining partners on dining etiquette, local residents’ behavior on behavior in foreign countries, other students’ behavior on asking questions in class, Hollywood celebrities on social and moral values, others’ behavior in a cafeteria on cleaning up after oneself, bystanders’ actions on intervention in emergencies, other drivers on driving speed/courtesy, others’ attire on dress in formal or religious settings, others’ calm behavior in long lines on one’s own calmness, media on political views, other pedestrians on one’s own walking patterns, peers on engaging in risky behaviors, attractiveness norms on first impressions, reference groups on treatment of eccentric individuals, and peers on social consumption of alcohol).

Participants first read a description of each influence, such as the following:

Everyday observation, and some psychological research, suggests that people unconsciously adjust the gestures that they use in social situations in order to make the people that they interact with feel more comfortable. For example, if a person is talking to someone who has their legs crossed or their hands placed on the table, the person might end up crossing their own legs or placing their own hands on the table.<sup>1</sup>

After reading about each example, participants were asked how much they were affected by that “tendency,” compared with the average Princeton student (1 = *much less than average student*, 4 = *same amount*, 7 = *much more than average student*).

**Item ratings.** Each example of conformity was rated (by two undergraduate and two graduate psychology students, all uninformed of our hypotheses) in terms of its desirability and tendency

to operate consciously. On 5-point scales, raters assessed “how desirable it is for a person to be influenced by that influence” and “how likely it is that a person who showed that influence would be aware that they were being influenced by it and would intentionally be influenced in that way.” Reliability was good for both ratings (Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ s = .91 and .84, respectively).

#### Results and Discussion

Participants showed a general tendency to view themselves as less susceptible than their peers to various forms of social influence. Across the 16 different influences, participants rated themselves as less susceptible than their average fellow student ( $M = 3.69$ , where 4 signifies “same” susceptibility as the average student, and lower numbers signify less susceptibility). Compared with the scale midpoint of 4, their lower ratings represented a significant tendency to deny personal susceptibility to conformity,  $t(42) = 4.62, p < .0001$ .

We next examined whether participants’ tendency to impute social influence more to others than the self was affected by social desirability and introspective availability. We conducted regression analyses within participants (using coders’ ratings of desirability and introspective availability as predictors of participants’ conformity assessments across the 16 examples) and then analyzed the unstandardized regression coefficients across participants. The results supported the hypothesis that both social desirability and introspective availability exert independent effects on denials of personal conformity. There was a significant effect of social desirability (mean of unstandardized regression coefficients = 0.22,  $SD = 0.66$ ),  $t(42) = 2.26, p = .03$ . And, there was a similarly sized effect of introspective availability ( $M = 0.21, SD = 0.66$ ),  $t(42) = 2.09, p = .04$ . There was no effect of the interaction of these two factors ( $M = -0.02, SD = 0.22; t < 1, ns$ ).

The results of this first study support the notion that people think they are less susceptible than others to conformity pressures. These results also provide evidence that this self–other asymmetry is rooted not only in the perceived undesirability of social influence but also in the tendency for social influences to operate nonconsciously. Participants were more likely to deny undesirable than desirable social influences, but they also were more likely to deny implicit than explicit ones. More important, each of these two sources of denial had independent—and additive—effects. In our next experiment, we sought further evidence that people’s blindness to personal conformity could occur independent of social desirability concerns.

### Study 2: Framing the Impact of Social Influence on Trendy Purchases

It was not keeping up with the Joneses that made her want a Viking range, she said. It was because, as a serious cook who likes to entertain, it had the features she needed.

—Elizabeth Olson, *The New York Times*

In Study 2, college students who owned a trendy electronic gadget rated the impact of social influence on their own purchase,

<sup>1</sup> Verbatim descriptions of all influences used in this research are available upon request.

relative to their fellow students. The relevant social influence was framed as either desirable or undesirable. Given the implicit nature of much of social influence (e.g., Chartrand & Bargh, 1999; Epley & Gilovich, 1999; Fitzsimons & Bargh, 2003; Vorauer & Miller, 1997; Word et al., 1974), we predicted that participants would deny this influence on their own purchases (relative to their peers' purchases), regardless of whether they were exposed to a socially desirable or undesirable depiction of that influence.

### Method

*Participants.* Forty Princeton undergraduates completed a questionnaire in exchange for candy.

*Procedure.* Students were approached on campus and asked whether they owned an iPod (a popular electronic gadget for playing music). Those who said they did were asked to complete a survey. Of the 100 students queried, 41 reported owning an iPod; 1 of those 41 declined to participate.

*Questionnaire and experimental manipulation.* In both experimental conditions, the questionnaire began by stating that the researchers were "interested in the factors that influence peoples' decisions to purchase consumer products" such as the iPod. Participants were further told that:

People are attracted to products for various reasons. Sometimes, people want a certain product because they really like the particular qualities that the product has to offer. For example, in the case of the iPod, they might like its small size, large memory capacity, clear sound, or sleek and modern styling.

A second paragraph delivered the experimental manipulation. That manipulation is indicated below via underlining for the socially desirable condition, and italics for the socially undesirable condition:

While it is [not necessarily wrong/of course a good idea] to buy an iPod for these reasons, sometimes people want certain products for more social reasons. For example, in the case of the iPod, they might notice that their classmates or friends own one and that might affect their interest in having one. Everyday observation, and a good deal of psychological research, suggests that being affected by this type of social influence [is/is not] a good thing. [It helps us to connect with and relate to those around us. It is easier for us to relate to other people if we have things in common or share similar experiences.] *By leading us to follow along, it prevents us from thinking for ourselves. It may be easier to follow social norms, but this leads us to sacrifice our individuality.* Thus, doing something as simple as buying an iPod can be a [good thing by strengthening our social connection with other people, and providing an additional dimension on which we can communicate and share experiences.] *bad thing by getting in the way of our being true to ourselves, and leading us to go along with what those around us are doing rather than just being ourselves.]*

Participants next provided their assessment on the basis of this description of the "desirability" of being "affected by social influence in getting an iPod" (1 = *very undesirable*, 5 = *neither desirable nor undesirable*, 9 = *very desirable*). They then assessed how much they got their iPod "because of social influence" relative to their peers (1 = *much less than the average Princeton student*, 5 = *same as the average Princeton student*, 9 = *much more than the average Princeton student*).

### Results and Discussion

*Social desirability.* The manipulation of social desirability was successful. Participants provided higher assessments of social desirability in the socially desirable version ( $M = 5.65$ ) than in the socially undesirable version ( $M = 4.05$ ) of the survey (and their ratings fell above the neutral midpoint in the desirable condition but below it in the undesirable condition),  $F(1, 38) = 6.02, p = .02$ .

*Perceived conformity.* Across the two desirability conditions, participants perceived themselves as having been less socially influenced than their peers in their iPod acquisitions ( $M = 3.30$ , where 5 = "same" as peers),  $t(38) = 6.17, p < .0001$ . Moreover, this effect emerged both when conformity was described as undesirable ( $M = 3.10$ ),  $t(18) = 5.05, p < .0001$ , and when it was described as desirable ( $M = 3.50$ ),  $t(18) = 3.68, p = .002$ . Indeed, there was no difference between the two conditions in participants' denials of their relative conformity,  $F(1, 38) = 0.52, p = .48$ .

Participants in this study thought that their own trendy purchases were less the result of social influence than the purchases of their fellow students. And, their denials of personal conformity persisted even when that conformity was framed as socially desirable. The results of this study, combined with those of Study 1, suggest that social desirability alone does not fully account for people's blind spot to their conformity. We suggest that another reason is that people consider introspective information more than observable behavior when assessing their own (relative to others') conformity, despite the frequently nonconscious nature of social influence. In the studies that follow, we more directly test this hypothesis about underlying mechanism.

### Study 3: The Introspection Illusion and Perceptions of Peer Influence

In this experiment, participants read about various alleged policy proposals related to life at their university, and they were told whether a group of their fellow students supported each one. After indicating their position on each proposal, they evaluated how much they had been influenced by the group of their peers, and also how much an alleged "other participant" (who agreed with the group on the same number of proposals as the participant) was influenced by it.

### Method

*Participants.* Forty-four Princeton undergraduates (27 women and 17 men) were paid for participating.

*Procedure.* After providing informed consent, participants proceeded to a computer workstation that presented the experiment. They read that the researchers were conducting a study on "memory and decision making" and that their task involved reading several proposals. They were told that these proposals dealt with matters of common concern to schools in the "Ivy League" and were slated for discussion at an upcoming meeting of those schools. They further read that before the meeting, each school organized "separate panels of undergraduate and graduate students" in order to gauge support for the proposals and that they would be shown whether their school's undergraduates supported each proposal. They then were presented with two practice proposals followed by 18 "actual" proposals. The first actual proposal was:

The committee moves to standardize all early admissions policies to non-binding "Early Action" rather than binding "Early Decision"

policies. This move would provide applicants with greater flexibility in the application and financial decision process; however, it would also severely multiply the amounts of early applications received for each school, leading to increased competition for applicants and less security for schools.

Each proposal ended with the statement: "The panel of Princeton Undergraduates supports [or, depending on version, *does not support*] this proposition." Random assignment led each proposal to be both supported and not supported over the total group of participants.

After reading each proposal, participants responded to a question regarding its contents and a question regarding the "Princeton panel's" position on it (both included to encourage participants to retain this information). They then indicated their own position on the proposal (*Support/Do not support*). After voting on all the proposals, they were shown their voting record next to the votes of the Princeton panel so that the number of proposals on which they had agreed with the panel was evident. They then assessed their conformity to the panel and their relative weighting of thought versus quantifiable behavioral evidence in making that assessment (see the *Final dependent measures* section).

In order to obtain participants' perceptions of a peer's conformity (in the same situation), they next were presented with a voting record that purportedly belonged to another participant in the experiment. They responded to the same set of dependent measures regarding that participant's record. The record was constructed from the participant's own such that the "other participant" agreed with the panel on the same number of issues as the participant, but with the specific proposals of agreement randomized to give the impression of a different voting record.

*Final dependent measures.* After participants viewed their own (or subsequently "another participant's") voting record, they assessed how much they believed that record was affected by both social influence (i.e., the "position of the panel of Princeton Undergraduates") and by analysis of the relevant proposal (i.e., "specific thoughts about the contents of each proposal"; 1 = *not at all influenced*, 7 = *extremely influenced*). They then reported what information they used to make the above judgments (i.e., how much weight they gave to "the number of propositions for which [your/their] vote agreed with that of the Princeton panel" and to "[your recollections of your/your assumptions of their] thoughts and reasoning about the contents of the propositions" [1 = *very little*, 7 = *very much*]). Finally, participants were asked to indicate the "approximate" number of propositions (out of 18) on which their (and the other participant's) votes agreed with the panel.

## Results and Discussion

*Actual conformity.* Participants agreed with the position ostensibly held by their peers on the Princeton panel on a mean of 10.55 out of 18 proposals. This level of conformity was highly significant (relative to the expected chance value of 9 out of 18),  $t(42) = 4.74, p < .0001$ .

*Perceived conformity.* Even though their fictitious peer exhibited the same level of conformity as themselves, participants showed asymmetric perceptions of social influence. A repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) revealed that participants felt that they had been less influenced by the panel of students ( $M = 3.07$ ) than had their peer ( $M = 3.61$ ),  $F(1, 43) = 6.79, p = .01$ . By contrast, they did not feel that they had been less influenced

than their peer by the "contents of each proposal"; indeed, the reverse was true ( $M_s = 5.68$  vs. 5.09),  $F(1, 43) = 5.76, p = .02$ . This interaction effect involving judgment target and type of influence was significant,  $F(1, 43) = 10.66, p = .002$ .

*Consideration of information.* As can be seen in Figure 1, the information participants reported considering in making their conformity assessments depended on whether they were judging themselves or someone else. This predicted interaction effect (Target  $\times$  Information Considered) was significant,  $F(1, 43) = 66.76, p < .0001$ . When evaluating whether their own votes were influenced by the views of their fellow students, participants reported putting far more weight on the nature of their thoughts about the proposals than on their actual votes,  $t(42) = 9.22, p < .0001$ . By contrast, when judging another student, they reported putting as much weight on that ostensible peer's votes as on that peer's presumed thoughts about the proposals ( $t < 1$ ).

When information considered was included as a covariate in the ANOVA, the effect of self-other on conformity assessments fell to nonsignificance, suggesting that information consideration fully mediated the relationship between self-other and perceived conformity,  $F(1, 85) = 1.30, p = .26$ . The modified Sobel test (Baron & Kenny, 1986) confirmed the significance of this reduction ( $Z = 3.96, p < .0001$ ).<sup>2</sup> In order to obtain further assurance that differences in information consideration were a source of the asymmetry in conformity assessments, rather than that those differences simply were claimed after-the-fact to justify a perceived difference in conformity, we also examined the relevant alternative model. This model, with information considered as the dependent measure and conformity assessments as the covariate, was highly significant,  $F(1, 85) = 31.92, p < .0001$ . Thus, although differences in information consideration fully mediated the effect of self-other on perceived conformity, the reverse was not true.

Our participants reported a self-other divergence in how they weighted conformity-related information. But can such self-reports be trusted? In order to test their validity, we examined whether participants who reported paying more attention to behavioral information in judging conformity did indeed show a stronger relationship between the apparent conformity of that behavior and their subsequent conformity judgments. Indeed, the more participants reported attending to behavior, the stronger a predictor behavior (i.e., number of votes conforming to the panel) was of the amount of conformity they imputed. This analysis was conducted via a test of the interaction effect of actual behavior and reported attention to behavior as a predictor of conformity assessments; the interaction effect was apparent both for self-assessments ( $B = 0.13, SE = .06, p = .05$ ) and other-assessments ( $B = 0.04, SE = .01, p = .009$ ).

Finally, participants were asked at the end of the study to recall how often their and their peer's votes had agreed with the student

<sup>2</sup> Because this study used a repeated measures design, these analyses were conducted by adding a condition code for self and other and then conducting the analyses as though the study were a between-subjects design, with the condition code as the independent variable. This approach is slightly conservative because of the added noise introduced by treating a given participant's ratings as independent of each other. The same approach was used for dealing with the repeated measures design (involving yoked dyads) of Study 4.

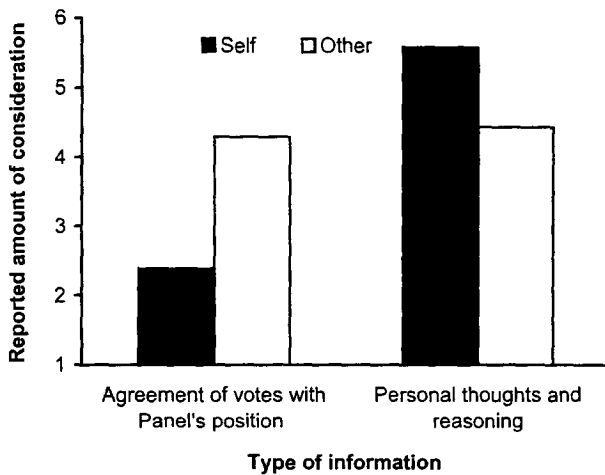


Figure 1. Reported information considered when judging the impact of social influence on oneself and on an alleged peer (see Study 3).

panel. It is interesting to note that participants recalled that they had agreed with the panel on fewer propositions ( $M = 9.91$ ) than had their peer ( $M = 10.98$ ),  $F(1, 43) = 6.99$ ,  $p = .01$ , even though the two levels of agreement were manipulated to be identical. Participants' recollections tended to be less well correlated with the truth when it came to assessing their own conformity,  $r(42) = .46$ ,  $p = .002$ , rather than an alleged peer's conformity,  $r(42) = .66$ ,  $p < .0001$ , as indicated by a  $z$  test of the difference between correlations ( $z = 1.89$ ,  $p = .06$ ).

The fact that differences in perceived conformity for the self and other persisted in an experiment in which the "other's" responses were in fact merely a scrambled version of participants' own underscores the robustness of the "alone in a crowd of sheep" effect. This study also provides support for our proposed underlying mechanism. When making judgments about their own (vs. others') susceptibility to social influence, participants were more likely to rely on thought-related evidence and less likely to rely on behavioral evidence. Mediation analyses suggested that this difference contributed to the observed blind spot to personal conformity.

This study raises the question of what particular thought-related information our participants considered. They were not exposed to any information about the thoughts of the "other" student whom they evaluated, and one could argue that this lack of access could be responsible for the observed asymmetry in conformity perception. Because we expected that access was not the sole issue, our next study provided observers with access to actors' introspections and made the same predictions as in Study 3. Unlike previous studies, this new study also used a between-subjects design (participants assessed self or other) in order to ensure that the self-other difference would emerge even when it was not made explicit.

#### Study 4: Available Introspections and Perceptions of Voting With the Party

Participants read descriptions of three political propositions allegedly being reviewed by the state of California. Each one included information about Republicans' and Democrats' pur-

ported position on it. They then recorded all of their thoughts on that proposition and indicated how they would vote on it. Finally, they indicated their party affiliation, assessed how much that affiliation influenced their votes, and reported what information they used to make that assessment. Participants in the "other" condition provided similar ratings of a yoked peer after reading the propositions and seeing their peer's recorded thoughts, votes, and party affiliation.

#### Method

*Pilot testing of political issues.* People's political positions can resemble those of their party for reasons other than social influence. For example, people may share goals with their party (e.g., cutting taxes or protecting the environment) that guide their own and their party's positions. Because we sought to examine perceptions of social influence when that influence could reasonably be thought to have occurred, we required a set of political issues that were not clearly partisan (but to which we would ascribe ostensible partisan support). In pilot testing, we provided undergraduate raters ( $N = 12$ ) with four issues and asked them to guess what percentage of Republicans and Democrats would support each one. The three issues selected for this study were perceived as equally likely to be supported by Republicans and Democrats (mean assumed differences in percentage of Democrats vs. Republicans supporting were 10.00%, 6.36%, and 5.00%, all  $t_s < 1$ ).

*Participants.* Sixty-four undergraduates at Stanford University participated in exchange for pay.

*Self condition procedure.* Participants in the self condition were told that we were "interested in their opinions on some issues being reviewed in the California legislature." (All participants resided in California and were likely familiar with the state's proposition system.) They were further told that we were interested in their thoughts while reading each issue and wanted them to record those thoughts as they read. They then were provided with the following thought-listing instructions (Cacioppo & Petty, 1981), accompanied by a sample thought listing (about eating vegetables):

The page following each issue is for you to write down your thoughts, so while you read the issue, have that page open as well so you can write as you go. We would like you to record all thoughts as they go through your head. You should be writing thoughts as you read, so don't wait until you're done reading the whole issue to write. The thoughts do not have to be sentences or even fully formed, they can be words or notes, whatever goes through your head. But, they should be everything that goes through your head while you read the issue.

The first issue participants read about was purportedly supported by Democrats and opposed by Republicans, as was the third issue, whereas the opposite was purportedly true for the second issue. The first issue was:

#### Max Cargo Size at Port of Los Angeles

Thousands of jobs and families revolve around the Port of LA, and a tremendous decline in shipping traffic has left many Californians out of work. To combat the decline, some members of the legislature proposed a measure increasing the cargo size allowed at the port, which would hopefully stem the losses to other ports (in and outside the U.S.) that allow larger/heavier cargo and increase traffic to the