Conformity and collectivism: A cross-cultural comparison

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Abstract

Increasing evidence suggests that social conformity declines in modern Western societies. In the present study, we compared conformity behavior in Western European and Chinese students under a new experimental paradigm that eliminates methodological problems of earlier designs. Both groups of participants were presented with 110 pairs of pictures and had to choose the one they preferred, before they were confronted with the same or an opposite choice that they were told to represent either the choice of a relevant reference group or a random, computer-generated choice, and then finally judged the picture pairs a second time. If the intervening events were believed to represent the opinion of their peers, Chinese participants demonstrated a higher degree of conformity than European participants. In a follow-up experiment the similarity between the participants' judgment and the intervening event was increased by presenting a short movie showing a human hand pressing a choice key. This didn't affect the Chinese group but increased conformity in the European group, suggesting that the hand movie made the social nature of the intervening event more salient.

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Since the famous study performed by Asch (Asch, 1951), the phenomenon of social conformity has been extensively investigated. In his original study, Asch asked his participants to judge the length of a line after the confederates would have made their judgments (often obviously incorrect). Almost all participants went along with the obviously wrong judgment at least sometimes. Post-experimental interviews revealed that the participants did not really believe in the (confederate-biased) answers they gave, which led Asch to the conclusion that this conformity effect reflects the belief in the superior knowledge of the group. Since then, Asch's study has been replicated in various forms and versions varying from more or less direct replications of Asch's original experiment (e.g., Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Perrin & Spencer, 1980, 1981; Vlaander & van Rooijen, 1985) to exploring conformity behavior under different paradigms and in different cultural groups (Klucharev, Hytonen, Rijpkema, Smidts, & Fernandez, 2009; Berry, 1967), and most authors agree that people conform to the group's norms and values because they want to be accepted by the group (e.g., Brauer & Chaurand 2010). Humans have the tendency to adopt behaviors of others for social purposes: to facilitate bonding of people into social groups with functional relationships. Besides social explanations, recent studies on conformity also attempt to look at the cognitive and neural mechanisms that account for conformity behavior in humans (for overview, see Stallen & Sanfey, 2015; Wu, Luo & Feng, 2016).

In many conformity studies, participants are rating a series of stimuli, such as the perceived beauty of unfamiliar faces, and are then confronted, after each rating, with the ratings of a relevant reference group, such as students from the same university (e.g., Shestakova, Rieskamp, Tugin, Ossadtchi, Krutitskaya & Klucharev, 2012). Somewhat later, participants are asked to rate the same stimuli again, and the common observation is that they change the previous rating into the direction of the rating of the reference group (i.e., rate the stimulus lower than before if the group rating was lower, and rate the stimulus higher than before if the group rating was higher than the participant's first rating)—the conformity effect. Interestingly for our present purposes, it has been noticed that conformity effects are strongly influenced by cultural norms of the group and do not seem to stay

stable over the time, especially in Western individualistic societies, which have seen a continuous decay of the size of the effect (Bond & Smith, 1996).

As alluded to already, the conformity effect is commonly ascribed to the "wisdom of the group", and it has been suggested that participants intentionally adjust their rating in order to reduce the difference between their own and the group rating (Asch, 1951). Kim and Hommel (2015) had proposed an alternative account by referring to a cognitive mechanism that could potentially account for conformity phenomena. They claimed that the Theory of Event Coding (TEC) offers a framework for explaining conforming behavior that is both plausible and more explicit than other available approaches with respect to the underlying psychological mechanisms. According to TEC, an event (perceived or produced) is cognitively and neurally coded in terms of its features, making no principled distinction between "self" and "other" (Hommel, Colzato & van den Wildenberg, 2009; Hommel, 2009), so that perceived and produced events are coded in a common format (Prinz, 1990) and integrated with each other. If so, rating a stimulus would lead to the integration of the stimulus and its rating and to the storage of this binding. If then participants would store not only their previous rating event but also the rating event of the reference group (i.e., the binding of the to be rated stimulus and the rating score of this group), they might retrieve both bindings when facing the stimulus another time and re-rate the stimulus by taking the (perhaps weighted) average of the retrieved ratings—thus producing a "conforming" effect.

Among other things, this account predicts that the social nature of the group rating would be unnecessary to create the effect. While presenting a rating as coming from a relevant reference group might increase attention to the rating, which after all is irrelevant for the actual task, and may thus make processing this rating more likely, it should also be possible to induce conformity-like effects by presenting intervening events without any social nature. Indeed, Kim and Hommel (2015) found no principled difference between "social" and "non-social" conditions: participants were influenced by numbers representing possible ratings irrespective of whether these numbers were presented as representing the scores of a reference group or as numbers being randomly produced

by a computer, or whether a movie of a hand pressing a number key in the rating range was played. However, Kim and Hommel's experimental paradigm raised some concerns about possible artifacts, as the method to calculate the conformity effect (which was adopted from Klucharev et al., 2009. and Shestakova et al., 2012) could have been contaminated by a regression to the mean (Ihmels & Ache, 2018). In fact, what had looked like a conformity effect could be reproduced in a control study without any intervening event. It does remain unclear however whether the experimental paradigm was suited to find a real conformity in the first place.

In order to avoid any statistical issues, we developed a novel paradigm that prevents regression-to-the-mean effects, which was achieved by replacing the rating response by a forced choice paradigm. In each trial, participants were presented with two pictures shown simultaneously and were asked to choose the one they liked more. The intervening event would then consist of either the same response or the alternative response, in which case a change of response choice under the second test should be more likely. Extensive piloting of this novel paradigm at Leiden University (the Netherlands) suggested that it is suited to pick up real conformity effects, which however turned out to be difficult to replicate. We reasoned that increasing individualization, especially in the Western societies, might systematically reduce the perceived relevance of other people's behavior for controlling one's own behavior, irrespective of whether the conformity effect is due to truly social impact or cognitive mechanisms, as suggested by Kim and Hommel (2015). Indeed, an earlier meta-analysis of conformity studies has revealed a general decline in the size of conformity effects over the years since Asch's pioneering studies (Bond et al., 1996), suggesting that Asch's effect might be a "child of its time" (cf. Perrin & Spenser, 1980, p.405) rather than a replicable and robust phenomenon. However, if it is true that this decline reflects the trend towards individualization in Western countries, it might be possible to find more reliable conformity effects in Eastern countries in which individualization is still less pronounced. Accordingly, we decided to compare conformity effects in the Netherlands, a country that is considered to be in the top five of individualism worldwide (as assessed by Hofstede's Individualism/Collectivism Scale: Hofstede,

Hofstede & Minkov, 2010, on which the Netherlands score 80 out of 100 Individualism points), and China (20 Individualism points on the Hofstede Scale), which despite a visible trend towards individualization has remained much more collectivistic in comparison (Van de Vliert, Yang, Wang & Ren, 2013). This is not to say that the way towards individualism is the same in the Netherlands (or other Western countries) and in China. According to Yan (2010), Chinese individualization process is fundamentally different from the individualization history in Western Europe: "A common thread in the discourse and practice of the Chinese individualization is that the individual must take more responsibility and proactive actions for the sake of achieving the wealth and power of the nation-state, namely, the modernization of country(…) As a result, the central axis of individualization in China is the changing relationship between the individual and the party-state instead of the categorical shift in the individual-society relationship as in Western Europe". It is also not to say that the trend towards individualism is the same in all subgroups of the respective countries, given the evidence that older people are commonly be more collectivistic than younger ones, and that collectivism is stronger in lower-income than in higher-income subpopulations (Van de Vliert et al., 2013). However, as these trends are visible in both European countries and China, a very substantial difference still remains (https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country/china/).

Experiment 1 thus compared conformity effects in two groups, one from the Netherlands—i.e., participants from a particularly individualistic culture—and one from China—i.e., participants from a still substantially more collectivistic culture. To reduce the cultural specificity of the previous paradigm, we decided to replace the previously used pictures of Caucasian female faces (Kim & Hommel, 2015) by more culturally neutral stimuli. Conformity effects were assessed by means of our new, confound-free version of the stimulus-rating task, which however kept the basic experimental logic of previous conformity studies: participants were presented with two plants and were to make a preference judgment before being exposed to a preference judgment that they were told to represent either the average judgment of the students of the same university (the "social" condition) or a judgment that was randomly generated by the computer (the "non-social" condition).

Thereafter, participants were presented with the same stimuli and were again to choose the preferred picture. A conformity effect would express itself by making preference changes from the first to the second judgment more likely after having been exposed to a different preference as compared to the same preference. We expected that conformity effects would be stronger, or even restricted to the Chinese group. As in the previous study (Kim and Hommel, 2015), we also manipulated the social versus non-social nature of the intervening event, as events that represent social aspects might increase conformity effects, either by triggering social comparison processes (Darley, 1966; Forsyth, 2000) or by attracting more attention to the intervening event (Campbell, Tesser & Fairey, 1986).

Experiment 1

Method

Eighty students from the Leiden University (age 17-33, mean age 21.15, 14 males) and 80 Chinese students (age 19-23, mean age 20.02, 22 males) of the Southwest University in China participated in the study. The four groups were comparable in terms of age, $t(158) = 1.22$, $p=.23$, and gender distribution, $\chi^2(160) =0.63$, $p =.43$ (see Table 1). All the participants were recruited via the University student recruitment website accessible mainly (but not exclusively) to psychology students. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions: “social” or “non-social”, resulting in N=40 for all four experimental groups. Given that the national roots of Dutch students, and of Dutch citizens in general, is more diverse than of those in the Chinese sample, we will refer to the two groups as (mainly Northwestern) European and Chinese, respectively.

Prior to the experiment all participants signed an informed consent form. Participants were informed that the aim of the experiment was to investigate the factors contributing to the esthetical values of the pictures. The experiment was controlled by an E-Prime program. We created 110 set pairs from 220 pictures of plants and flowers (downloaded from Google images) and had participants

decide, in each trial, which of the two presented pictures they found more attractive. The pictures were presented on a computer monitor and participants indicated their choice by pressing the Z and the M keyboard button for the left or right picture, respectively, which would trigger the brief appearance of a green frame surrounding the chosen picture. Immediately thereafter, the same pair of pictures was presented with one of the pictures also surrounded by a green frame (intervening event, IE)—either the same picture that was chosen by the participant or the other picture (with a probability of 50% each). In the "social" condition, participants were informed that the IE represents the average choice of other students of the same university. In the "non-social" condition, participants were informed that the IE was randomly chosen by the computer and was only used to separate the trials. In both conditions, participants were informed that the IE would not require any further action on their side. After a short break of 15-20 minutes, the same 110 pairs (presented in random sequence) were to be judged the same way, this time without any IE (Figure 1). At the end of the experiment all participants were debriefed about the real purpose of the study.

Statistical analyses

For each participant, and separately for the two groups (European vs. Chinese) and for the two experimental conditions (social vs. non-social), we calculated the percentage of stimulus pairs for which participants' choice changed from the first to the second session as a function of whether the intervening event referred to the same picture as the initial choice (i.e., same intervening event) or to the other picture (i.e., different intervening event). Frequencies of choice-changes were submitted to a 2x2x2 analysis of variance (ANOVA) with group (European vs. Chinese) and condition (social vs. non-social) varying as between-participant factor, and similarity (same IE vs. different IE) as within-participant factor. The percentage of choice-changes observed for the two groups and for the two conditions as a function of the intervening event (same vs. different) are reported in Table 1. Conformity effect scores, calculated by subtracting the percentage of choice-changes obtained for

same intervening events from that observed for different intervening events, are displayed in Figure 2.

Results and discussion

The ANOVA revealed significant main effects of group, $F(1, 156) = 12.016$, $p = 0.001$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.072$, and similarity (i.e., the conformity effect), $F(1, 156) = 7.933$, $p = 0.005$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.048$: the percentage of choice-changes was higher for Chinese (M = 11.3, SEM = 0.5) than European (M = 9.0, SEM = 0.5) students and for different (M = 10.6, SEM = 0.4) than for same (M = 9.7, SEM = 0.4) events. The main effect of condition was not significant, $F(1, 156) = 1.628$, $p = 0.204$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.010$. Importantly, a significant three-way interaction involving the factors similarity, condition and group was obtained, $F(1, 156) = 5.153$, $p = 0.025$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.032$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests showed that for Chinese students, the conformity effect was significant in the social ($p = 0.01$) but not in the non-social ($p = 1.0$) condition; for the European students the conformity effects was not significant in either of the two conditions ($p_s = 1.0$). There were no other significant sources of variance, $F_s \leq 2.3$, $p_s \geq 0.13$.

In accordance with our expectation, the conformity effect was stronger and indeed only significant in the Chinese group, while no significant effect was obtained in the European group. This is consistent with the consideration that conformity effects are more pronounced in cultural contexts that rely (more) on collectivism. Moreover, even the Chinese group showed conformity effects in the social condition only. Before interpreting this effect, and considering its modest size, we aimed to see whether it could be replicated in Experiment 2.

Experiment 2

Experiment 2 was designed exactly as Experiment 1, except that we modified the intervening event to increase the perceptual similarity between this event and the participant's own rating

action, which according to our TEC approach should increase the intervening event's impact by making the memory trace of the participants own action and the memory trace storing the intervening event less discriminable. This modification consisted of presenting a short movie of a hand pushing one of the to answer buttons, just like in the Kim and Hommel (2015) study—where this manipulation yielded the numerically largest conformity effects, before the frame indicated the chosen stimulus just like in Experiment 1.

Method

Eighty European students (age 18-29, mean age 22.17, 24 males) and 80 Chinese students (age 18-26, mean age 20.87, 13 males) were tested. All the participants were recruited via the University student recruitment website accessible mainly (but not only) to psychology students. The two groups were not comparable in terms of age, $t(158) = 3.48$, $p=.001$, and gender distribution, $\chi^2(160) =4.25$, $p =.039$: European participants were slightly older than the Chinese one, and the proportion of males was higher in the European sample than in the Chinese one (see Table 1). All students were randomly assigned to one of the two experimental conditions: "social" or "non-social".

The method was as in Experiment 1, with the only exception that we extended the intervening event. After the participants indicated their choice by pressing the Z and the M keyboard button for the left or right picture, respectively, and the brief appearance of a green frame surrounding the chosen picture, a short film would appear with a human hand pushing one of the two keyboard buttons, same or different to the participants' choice (with a probability of 50% each). Thereafter, the same pair of pictures was presented with one of the pictures surrounded by a green frame, corresponding to the button chosen in the film (this part was exactly as in Experiment 1).

Results and discussion

The data were analyzed as in Experiment 1. The ANOVA revealed a significant main effect of condition, $F(1, 156) = 7.203$, $p = 0.008$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.044$: the percentage of choice-changes was higher for the non-social (M = 12.6, SEM = 0.6) than for the social (M = 10.4, SEM = 0.6) condition. Neither the main effect of similarity nor the main effect of group was significant, $Fs \leq 2.49$, $p_s \geq 0.12$. Importantly, a significant two-way interaction between similarity and condition was observed, $F(1, 156) = 5.563$, $p = 0.020$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.034$. Bonferroni post-hoc tests showed that the conformity effect was significant for the social ($p = 0.04$), but not for the non-social ($p = 1.0$) condition. None of the remaining interactions, including the three-way interaction between condition, similarity and group, were significant, $Fs \leq 2.3$, $ps \geq 0.13$ (See FOOTNOTE 1 for further comments).

The outcomes only partly met our expectations. On the one hand, we were able to replicate the conformity effect in the social condition of the Chinese group. In contrast to Experiment 1, we also found this effect in the European group, suggesting that increasing the similarity between the participant's own rating action and the intervening event was successful in boosting this effect in the European participants. On the other hand, however, this manipulation did not seem to have any effect on behavior in the non-social condition. If inter-event similarity would have an effect on its own, one would have expected that the effect in this condition would have been at least somewhat larger in Experiment 2 than in Experiment 1, but this was clearly not the case.

General discussion

In two experiments, we tested whether effects of social conformity would be more pronounced in collectivistic than in individualistic societies, as reflected in our Chinese and Northwestern European samples, respectively. In accordance with our expectations we observed higher levels of conformity in the Chinese group than in the European group. Interestingly, however, this was restricted to

conditions under which participants were led to believe that they were confronted with the opinion of other participants (i.e., the social condition). Increasing the similarity between the intervening event and the participant's own action eliminated the difference between Chinese and European participants, but again conformity effects were restricted to the social condition. These observations have a number of interesting implications.

First, they suggest that conformity behavior might no longer be as strong in modern societies as it apparently was when Asch (1951) carried out his legendary studies, which fits with the observation that conformity-effect sizes seem to have declined systematically during recent decades (Bond & Smith, 1996). It is interesting to consider that this decline can be observed even though modern studies of conformity are using measures that are likely to be more sensitive than those used in Asch's original experiments. While these experiments employed tasks in which participants were judging unambiguous physical parameters, such as the length of a line, modern studies often make use of the tasks reflecting attitudinal or aesthetical judgments (Allen, 1965; Klucharev et al., 2009), which arguably are easier to change. As our and other studies have shown, more recently obtained conformity effects tend to be rather weak and are sometimes difficult to replicate. And yet, our findings suggest that at least in some cultures, under some circumstances, and with an appropriate experimental setup, conforming behavior can be shown to manifest itself. In particular, and all other things equal, people seem to be more affected by others' opinion in collectivistic cultures like China as compared to individualistic societies like the Netherlands or Northwestern Europe.

Second, our findings provide evidence that the greater tendency to show conformity effects in a collectivistic than in an individualistic culture can be compensated for by strengthening the perceptual relationship between one's own judging behavior and that of others. The fact that this compensation was only obtained for the social condition raises two questions: what is the psychological mechanism underlying this compensation and why does it only occur if the intervening event is explicitly related to a social reference group? For Chinese participants, merely mentioning the connection between the intervening event and the reference group was apparently already

sufficient to evoke conformity. Adding an extra manipulation in the form of the movie (Experiment 2) did not seem to boost this effect but there are reasons not to over-interpret this observation. The hand shown in the movie was that of a Caucasian female. While we do not know whether the Chinese participants were able to detect this (rather subtle) characteristic, it is possible that they did and thus interpreted the action as an "out-group" act, which in turn might have worked against or even reduced the conformity effect. In the European group, however, seeing an actual action performed by someone who was likely to be considered a member of the reference group might have emphasized the social nature of the intervening event. In other words, the European participants might have needed more direct, less abstract cues to realize the social implications of the intervening event while for the Chinese participants merely mentioning a reference group might have been sufficient already. If so, European and Chinese (and, by implication, members of individualistic and collectivistic cultures) might not differ so much with respect to the potential to which socially relevant stimuli can affect their behavior but rather with respect to the spontaneity with which they realize the social nature of such stimuli.

Third, if it is true that increasing individualism works against the spontaneous exhibition of conformity but that this bias can be overcome by means of more specific information about the social nature of stimuli, how might this pattern be theoretically understood? Previous studies from our lab have revealed that people from individualistic and collectivistic cultures and subcultures differ with respect to what Hommel (2015) has coined "metacontrol". This concept is based on functional and neuroscientific insights into cognitive-control mechanisms in general and individual differences in the use of such mechanisms in particular (for an overview, see Hommel & Colzato, 2017). The basic idea is that one's current control style can vary between extreme persistence, which includes a strong focus on currently relevant information to the disadvantage of less relevant information, and extreme flexibility, which is characterized by a weak focus and a more integrative processing style that considers a broad range of information. Converging evidence suggests that individualism is likely to bias towards a more persistent control style while collectivism is more likely

to bias towards flexibility. These biases systematically affect performance in tasks that do not require or favor one particular control style and can thus be considered a kind of default that reflects one's cultural learning experience (Hommel & Colzato, 2017). Of particular interest for our purposes, the current control style affects the degree of self-other overlap, that is, the degree to which commonalities versus distinguishing features are emphasized in the cognitive representations of oneself and of others. For instance, meditating Buddhists have been shown to exhibit a stronger joint Simon effect—an indicator of the degree that another individual working on the same task is considered in one's task representation—than well-matched atheists (Colzato, Zech, Hommel, Verdonschot, van den Wildenberg & Hsieh, 2012). Considering that Buddhism is a particularly anti-individualistic religious practice (to quote Zen Master Dogen (1976): "To forget the self is to be enlightened by all things, to be enlightened by all things is to remove the barriers between oneself and others"), this suggests that this reflects a stronger bias towards flexibility in humans, which in turn increased the overlap of cognitive representations of self and other. According to our theoretical account, this should increase the probability to confuse event representations referring to one's own actions and event representations referring to the actions of others, which would account for the observed intercultural effects. Interestingly, however, there is evidence that metacontrol biases can be rather easily overcome in the presence of current task constraints, such as when task requirements temporarily call for more persistence or flexibility (Mekern, Sjoerds & Hommel, 2019). Increasing the saliency of the social nature of the intervening event by means of the movie used in Experiment 2 might have had exactly this effect: it might have been sufficient for Europeans to overcome their spontaneously stronger bias towards persistence and shift more towards flexibility, which made them more similar to the Chinese participants in terms of processing the intervening event and, as a consequence, in showing conformity effects. Hence, introducing the movie is likely to have acted as a sociality prime that emphasized the social nature of the intervening event, not unlike the interdependence prime employed by Kühnen and Oyserman (2002).

A clear limitation of our study is that individualism and collectivism was operationalized through citizenship of individualistic versus collectivistic countries. We have based our assessment of individualism/collectivism on the widely accepted Hofstede individualism scale, on which the Netherlands and China are located on opposite poles. We thus used the same rationale as Nisbett and Miyamoto (2005) and other colleagues, who compared citizens of the US (91 Hofstede individualism points) and of Japan (46 individualism points) as representatives of individualistic versus collectivistic cultures, respectively. However, the Hofstede scale is based on sociological concepts and country-wide measurements and can thus not be easily translated into individual scales (e.g., Schimmack, Oishi & Diener, 2005). Accordingly, we were unable to determine the individual degrees of individualism and collectivism and are thus unable to compare the individual range and variability with respect to such measures. While there are attempts to develop individual scales (see Culpepper & Watts, 1999), their psychodiagnostic characteristics and acceptance are not yet comparable to that of the Hofstede scale. However, further developments may make it easier to assess individual characteristics both for manipulation checks and the investigation of individual differences.

Taken altogether, our findings are in line with the proposed weakening of conformity in modern western societies (Bond & Smith, 1996; Perrin & Spencer, 1980, 1981) but also shows that conformity behavior can be increased by making the social nature of conformity-related information more salient. This might suggest a role of metacontrol in the processing of social information and introducing intercultural differences, which in turn might reflect spontaneous default biases but not necessarily stable traits. Further studies are needed to understand which conditions have the most effect on the manifestation of conformity, how cultural values affect conforming behavior, and which cognitive processes can explain it.

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FOOTNOTE 1

Note that in Experiment 2 our random group assignment did not produce an equal distribution of gender and age ranges over the four groups (see also Table 1). To test whether the unequal distribution of male participants across the four groups (the dominance of female participants is a typical result of random sampling students of the social/behavioral sciences) might have affected the outcomes, we reran the ANOVA after excluding all male participants. Unsurprisingly, the corresponding loss in power rendered some of the p values no longer strictly significant, but the general pattern was comparable to the analysis including all participants. More specifically, in Experiment 2, the main effect of condition reached p=.069, and the interaction between similarity and condition reached p=.054. A comparable pattern was observed in Experiment 1 as well, where the exclusion of male participants obviously reduced power but left all statistical effects intact, except that the main effect of condition became significant, p=.048, and the interaction between similarity, country, and condition reached p=.06.

To test the possible effect of age, for both experiments, we computed Spearman's rank correlation coefficients between age and the size of the conformity effect, separately for the European and Chinese samples and for the social and non-social conditions. None of the correlations reached the significance level (Experiment 1: all rho = |.28|, all p_s =.08; Experiment 2: all rho = |.25|, all p_s =.12).

Table 1. *Percentage of choice-changes as a function of group (European vs. Chinese), condition (social vs. non-social), and the intervening event (same vs. different) for both Experiment 1 and Experiment 2. Standard errors of the mean are shown in parentheses.*

	Experiment 1				**Experiment 2**			
	Europe		**China**		**Europe**		**China**	
	Social	**Non-Social**	**Social**	**Non-Social**	**Social**	**Non-Social**	**Social**	**Non-Social**
Gender (F/M)	33/7	33/7	32/8	30/10	25/15	31/9	37/3	30/10
Age	20.9 (0.5)	21.5 (0.4)	21.0 (0.1)	20.4 (0.2)	21.6 (0.3)	22.7 (0.5)	21.1 (0.3)	20.9 (0.2)
Similar IE	7.9 (0.7)	9.5 (0.7)	10.3 (0.7)	11.2 (0.7)	9.4 (0.9)	11.9 (0.9)	10.1 (0.9)	13.5 (0.9)
Dissimilar IE	8.2 (0.7)	10.4 (0.7)	12.4 (0.7)	11.2 (0.7)	10.7 (0.9)	11.6 (0.9)	11.4 (0.9)	13.3 (0,9)

Figure 1

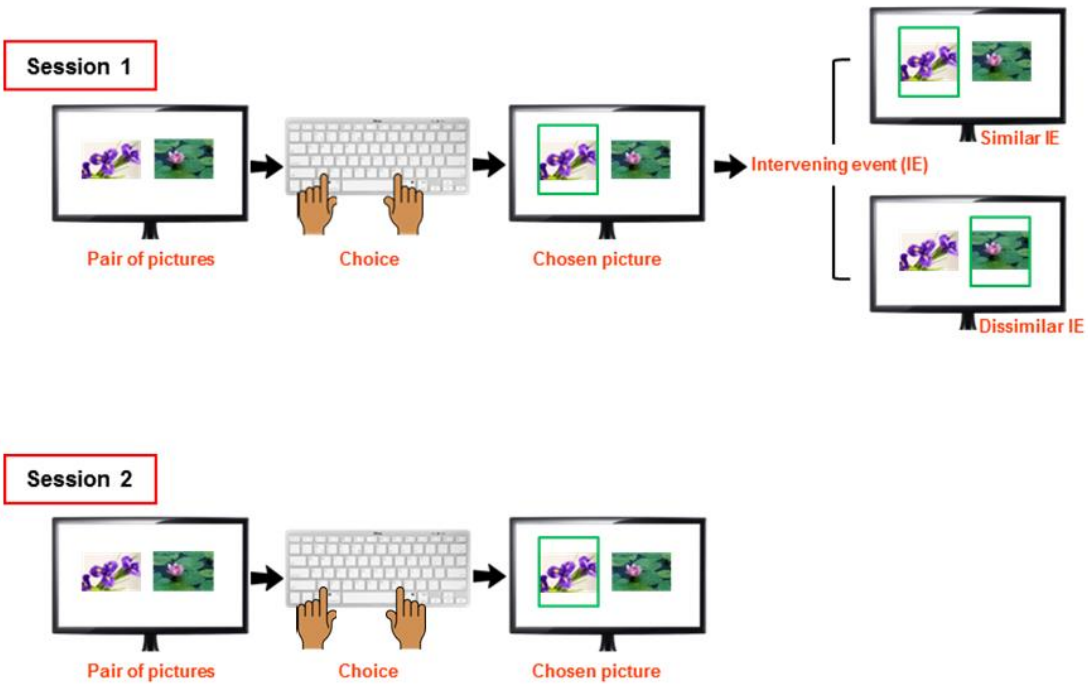
Session 1
Pair of pictures
Choice
Chosen picture
Intervening event (IE)
Similar IE
Dissimilar IE
Session 2
Pair of pictures
Choice
Chosen picture

Figure 2

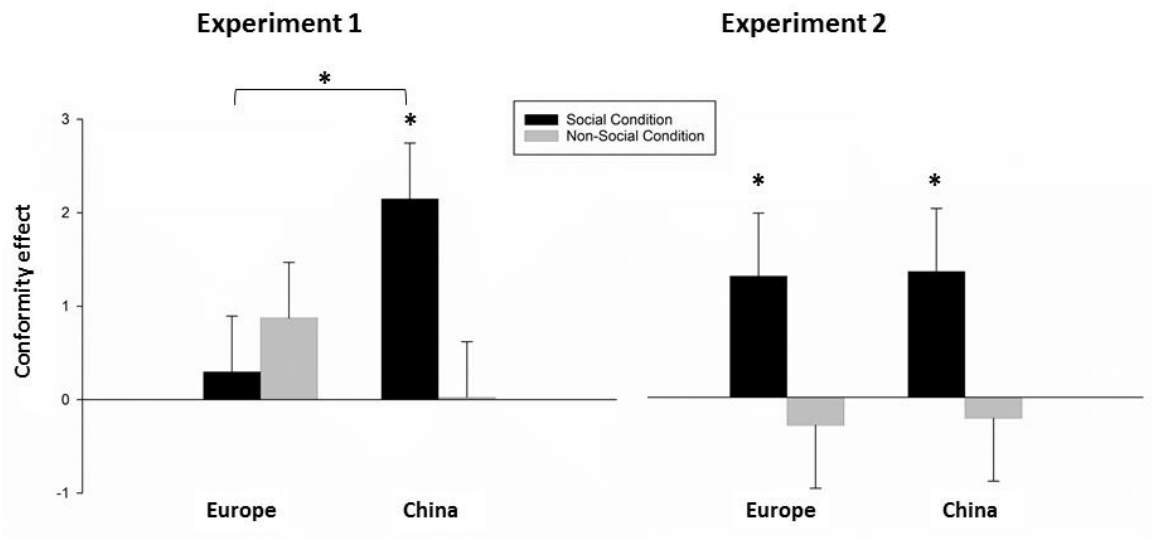
Experiment 1
Experiment 2
Social Condition
Non-Social Condition
Conformity effect
3
2
1
0
-1
*
*
*
*
Europe
China
Europe
China

Figure captions

Figure 1

Schematic representation of the sequence of events occurring on each trial of the conformity task of Experiment 1

Figure 2.

Conformity effect scores, calculated by subtracting the percentage of choice-changes obtained for same intervening events from that observed for different intervening events, as a function of group (European vs. Chinese), condition (social vs. non-social), for both Experiment 1 and Experiment 2. Error bars represent standard errors of the mean.