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MAJORITY INFLUENCE DURING SOCIAL LEARNING IN CHIMPANZEES AND HUMANS

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We aim to answer the question whether chimpanzees conform to a majority of peers against better knowledge (strong conformity). In humans, strong conformity appears no later than 4 years of age and is probably universal across cultures. Conformity serves a crucially important function in the maintenance of population level variability by promoting quick and stable in-group uniformity, which then stabilizes between-group diversity over time. It has been shown that, learning from others, chimpanzees preferably adopt the most widespread strategy. It remains an open question however if they will follow a majority against better knowledge. Here we present data from captive chimpanzees in a social learning task. After learning one way to retrieve food from a dispenser, individuals are confronted with three other members of their group demonstrating an alternative strategy. Afterwards individuals regain access to the dispenser while being watched by the majority. While human children in the same task tend to switch to the majority strategy, chimpanzees prefer their own strategy to the majority's strategy. Animal husbandry and research complied with the "PASA Primate Veterinary Healthcare Manual".

Keywords: chimpanzees, conformity, social learning.