Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, there has been a large increase in the use of online platforms, making it important to study these new environments. This study examined conformity in virtual settings. Conformity occurs when individuals alter their behaviors/opinions to match the majority. We recruited 40 undergraduate students in a study on memory and examined whether participants would conform by turning their camera on or off in accordance with confederates’ actions or experimenter’s instructions in a Zoom meeting. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: Keep Camera On, Keep Camera Off, Gradually Turn On Camera, or Gradually Turn Off Camera. Participants were measured on conformity and obedience to following the experimenter’s instructions of keeping their camera on or conforming to the actions of the confederates around them. Our analyses revealed statistically significant differences between the conditions. The control condition, in which the confederates kept their cameras on, had both the highest and fastest rates of conformity. However, when analyzing the results without the control group, the Keep Camera Off condition had the highest and fastest rates of conformity. These results provide evidence that virtual conformity is very likely to occur. Therefore, individuals learning and working online should be aware of how their actions can be influenced by others and how they can influence the actions of others, even through a screen.

Hypothesis
If all confederates have their camera off/on, then the participant will conform and turn in influence the actions of others, even through a screen.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH
The Asch Line Judgement Task (Asch, 1956) was the key inspiration for our research. In this classic study, participants were asked to match a target line from among three options. However, 6-8 confederates provided wrong responses before the participant gave their response. Asch found that ⅔ of the participants conformed to the confederates’ wrong responses. Limitations of past research include the setting and population. Most research was conducted face-to-face and done with participants ages 30 and older. Many of the studies also have only one correct answer.

METHODS
- 40 Participants: 34 F, 6 M, M age = 20 years, SD = 1.68
- Recruited for a study on memory from the Psychology Subject Pool and convenience sampling
- Complete Consent/Intake Form
- Participant assigned to 1 of 4 conditions
- Join Zoom meeting with 3 confederates and 1 experimenter
- Listen to short story, “Little Thief in the Pantry”
- Ask why did or did not conform
- Debriefing

Illustration from the story participants thought they would be tested on, Little Thief in the Pantry by Anonymous

DEPENDENT VARIABLES
- Conformity determined by “yes, participant conformed” or “no, participant did not conform”
- Obedience determined by “yes, listened to experimenter instructions” or “no, did not follow experimenter instructions”
- Time to comply: If the participant never complied with the group, the time recorded was 240 seconds, which is time to complete the reading. If participant immediately conformed to the group and for the entirety of the story, their time recorded was 0 seconds.
- At end of study asked participants their rationale for either conforming or not to uncover the thought processes, opinions, and underlying reasons for doing so

RESULTS
Results supported the hypothesis that conformity can occur in a virtual setting, consistent with Asch (1956). The most common reasons for participant’s actions were following the group and following directions. This experiment studied the overlap of obedience and conformity, whereas past research only studied one variable. The use of four groups, instead of two, allowed the researchers to study which conditions produce the highest rates of obedience and conformity, however the use of convenience sampling and psychology majors posed the risks of reactivity and awareness of the deception.

REFERENCES