**False Consensus**

From what I’m seeing, most of the false consensus scales seem to be domain specific. For example, one study compared the consensus beliefs of high and low performers on a test and to see if high performers underestimate their own performance and overestimate the performance of their classmates. Another looked at conservation behaviors and had a “green false consensus” scale to measure the self-other divide in conservation beliefs. Unless we have a specific type of false consensus belief we want to test, I think Krueger and Clement’s scale is probably the best way to go. They use items from the MMPI and the steps are given below.

* Step 1: participants presented with statements from MMPI with which they either agree or disagree
* Step 2: participants rated social desirability of agreement with each item
* Step 3: participants then estimated proportion of people who would agree with each statement

If we choose 5 items, that would mean 15 additional questions. Step 2, the social desirability of each item, is used as a covariate. It seems like it’s standard practice in false consensus lit to include it.

The 5 items below are from Krueger and Clement. There were significant differences between endorsers and non-endorsers on their estimates of how many people would agree with the item (p < .001). Furthermore, each item is endorsed around 50% of the time according to MMPI stats, which is how the authors define a “good item.”

* I have very few fears compared to my friends.
* I have no fear of spiders.
* I think I would like the kind of work that a forest ranger does.
* I think most people would lie to get ahead.
* Criticism or scolding hurts me terribly.

*Krueger and Clement Study 1:*

“They were seated in individual cubicles equipped with Macintosh Hci computers, and instructions for the separate components of the experimental session appeared on the screen. Over the course of 1 hr, subjects were presented with 40 statements from the MMPI-2 (Butcher et al., 1989) three times. Each time, statements appeared individually and remained on the screen until the subjects responded. After the presentation of each of the 40 items, subjects did or did not endorse the statement by clicking a box labeled agree or disagree. After completing the 40 judgments, subjects worked on an unrelated task for 5-10 min. For the second presentation, they were instructed to rate how socially desirable it is to agree with an item. This rating was made for each item on a scale ranging from socially undesirable (1) to socially desirable (9). Then, subjects worked again on an unrelated task for 5- 10 min. When the items were presented for the third time, subjects were instructed to "enter the percentages between 0 and 100 that best reflect your belief about the proportion of people who would agree with each statement."

*Bauman Study 1:*

“The questionnaire included the following issues: abortion, euthanasia, death penalty, animal testing, legalization of drugs, the insanity plea, "gays in the military," lower drinking age, foreign aid, mandatory seat belt laws, ban on gun sales, ban on smoking in public places, women in combat, immigration laws, condom distribution in high schools, racial quotas, prayer in schools, adoption rights for homosexual couples, marriage between homosexual couples, and pornography on the Internet. The questionnaire consisted of two sections: the participant's own position on each issue (for or against) and an estimate of the percentage of peers who were in favor of each issue (on a scale from 0 to 100%). A behavioral-intention questionnaire was also added to assess the likelihood that participants will engage in acts related to each issue on a 7-point Likert scale (e.g., how likely would you be to buy beer for an underaged friend?). Then, a questionnaire which asked participants to answer whether they would engage in each behavior (yes/no) and to estimate the frequency of these same behaviors for their peers was included (also on a 100% scale). An 11-point rating scale (from -5 to +5, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree with 0 indicating a completely neutral position) was also utilized to rate the direction and strength of participants' attitudes for each issue. Finally, a measure of certainty (on a scale of 1 "very uncertain" to 5 "very certain") about participants' estimates on each issue to measure their perceived accuracy was included.”

* Step 1: presented with policy issues and asked whether they’re for or against each
* Step 2: estimate percentage of peers who were in favor of each issue
* Step 3: certainty measure

**From Bauman:** “Many of the false consensus studies have examined external characteristics, such as physical traits (e.g., eye color) or behavior (e.g., Ross et al., 1977; Marks & Miller, 1987). In these cases, when either physical or social reality is relatively clear, individuals have more information regarding others' beliefs and, subsequently, they may be less prone toward social perceptual errors. However, when inferring others' less-objective attitudes, people's judgments may be based more on their own (more salient) beliefs.”

“While the nature of the comparison population did not affect the findings, the order of measurement and the number of estimates were found to influence the effect. Specifically, the effect size was larger when there were fewer items and when estimates for consensus were made before endorsements. Furthermore, the number of available options has been shown to reduce the false consensus effect (Marks & Duval, 1991). By presenting participants with different numbers of response alternatives, the authors were able to determine that false consensus is influenced by the availability heuristic (i.e., the tendency to base judgments on information that easily accessible in memory (Tversky & Kahneman, 1973). Making other positions salient to participants reduced the tendency to assume that most people shared their beliefs.” (pg. 308)