

Nonparticipation as Self-Censorship: Publicly Observable Political Activity in a Polarized Opinion Climate

Andrew F. Hayes · Dietram A. Scheufele ·
Michael E. Huge

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Abstract In a polarized opinion climate, people may refrain from participating in publicly observable political activities that make them vulnerable to scrutiny and criticism by others who hold opinions that differ from their own. We took a dispositional approach to testing this claim by determining whether people who are relatively more influenced by the climate of opinion when choosing whether or not to voice an opinion, measured with the *Willingness to Self-Censor* scale [Hayes et al. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research* 17 (2005) 298], are also relatively less likely to engage in public political activities. In a poll of residents of the United States, we found that even after controlling for interest in politics, political ideology, ideological extremity, political efficacy, attention to political news, dispositional shyness, frequency of political discussion, and demographics, dispositional self-censors reported having engaged in relatively fewer public political activities over the prior 2 years compared to those less willing to censor their own opinion expression. These results are consistent with our interpretation of political participation as a social process that is governed in part by the social psychological implications of participation to the person. At a larger theoretical level, our findings

A. F. Hayes (✉) · M. E. Huge
School of Communication, The Ohio State University, Derby Hall, 3016, Columbus, OH
43210, USA
e-mail: hayes.338@osu.edu

M. E. Huge
e-mail: huge.8@osu.edu

D. A. Scheufele
School of Journalism and Mass Communication, University of Wisconsin—Madison,
Madison, WI, USA
e-mail: scheufele@wisc.edu

connect the literature on opinion perceptions and opinion expression with research on political participation.

Keywords Political participation · Disagreement · Self-censorship · Public opinion · Opinion expression

Introduction

A September 7, 2003 Associated Press article (Raum, 2003) characterized one of the early debates between the U.S. Democratic presidential candidates as mean-spirited, and, at times, bordering on uncivil as they took turns offering scathing critiques of the George W. Bush administration and its policies. Such rancor can be expected on the campaign trail between people vying for votes, but it exists within the halls of government as well. Raum (2003) cites Charlie Black, a veteran Republican party strategist and former chairman of the Republican National Committee as noting that the divisiveness in U.S. Congress has been increasing. U.S. Representative Ray LaHood of Illinois concurs, telling Jim Abrams of the Associated Press that the lack of civility in Washington is “as bad as I’ve seen it in my 10 years of Congress” (Abrams, 2004). Even Vice-President Richard Cheney has gotten into the action, once exchanging verbal expletives on the floor of Congress with Senator Patrick Leahy, an event which received widespread news coverage.

Raum (2003) notes that “...seldom have American politics been so polarized and uncivil as today, not just in the capital, but across the country.” Indeed, on the sidewalks of the typical middle-class suburb, politics is an exceedingly divisive subject. The public is divided with respect to Presidential preferences, positions on perennially controversial issues such as abortion and affirmative action, more recent controversies such as banning smoking in public places, the merits and dangers of genetically modified food and teaching intelligent design in schools, and the relative importance of civil rights versus national security (e.g., Nisbet, 2004; Pew Research Center for People and the Press, 2003; Shanahan, Scheufele, & Lee, 2001; Shaw, 2003; Shaw, Shapiro, Lock & Jacobs, 1998). This polarization of public opinion combined with an apparent decrease in civility of political discourse as reflected by media accounts of local and national politics means that political activity such as discussion and other forms of political opinion expression are potentially dangerous interpersonally. The risk of talking about political matters is high, particularly if it means sharing your opinions with others. The public expression of one’s opinions entails the real likelihood of being scrutinized, criticized, put on the defensive, or ostracized by others who disagree (Noelle-Neumann, 1993). It is not uncommon to hear of reports of people with different political beliefs clashing in public, sometimes to the point of physical violence (e.g., Associated Press, 2005;

Gilbert, 2004). Given these risks, it is hard to fault people for keeping their political opinions hidden from the views of others.

The research presented herein suggests that the combative, argumentative, and divisive tone of politics may inhibit public forms of political participation more so among those who are particularly averse to volatile social situations. We argue that with the exception of voting, most forms of political activity involve some degree of “publicness” and can be construed as public forms of opinion expression. Noting that people vary in their willingness to display their opinions in a hostile opinion climate (Hayes, Glynn, & Shanahan, 2005a), we argue in this manuscript that some people, even in a democracy where freedom of expression is encouraged, engage in a form of self-censorship by refraining from engaging in various publicly observable political activities. We take a dispositional approach to this construal of nonparticipation as self-censorship by examining if people who differ in their “willingness to self-censor”—their reticence to express their opinions in a hostile opinion climate—differ systematically in how frequently they engage in publicly observable political activities that leave their opinions available for others to see and potentially scrutinize and criticize. Thus, we ask whether nonparticipation is, at least in part, a social psychological phenomenon, where the decision to act or not is based in part on the perceived costs to the self in the context of one’s social world.

If supported, this link between willingness to self-censor and political participation would have important normative implications for democratic citizenship. As Noelle-Neumann (1974, 1993) suggested in her spiral of silence theory, social fears based on perceptions of who will win an election may influence citizens’ willingness to express their opinions during a campaign. As a result, public support for a given candidate may be weaker than it otherwise would. Our examination of the concept of willingness to self-censor suggests that the impact of social predispositions on democratic citizenship may reach beyond simple opinion expression and include many other forms of campaign and political participation.

Participation as a Publicly Observable Social Process

Verba, Schlozman and Brady (1995) define activities that are intended to influence government action—whether they be direct, such as implementing a policy, or indirect, such as influencing others—as political participation. Who participates and why are questions that continue to intrigue social scientists from various disciplines, including political science, communication, and sociology (for overviews, see Rosenstone & Hansen, 1993; Scheufele & Ostman, 2003; Verba & Nie, 1972; Verba et al., 1995). Past research has demonstrated numerous correlates and determinants of political activity including demographic variables such as education, income, and gender, as well as involvement in a particular issue, general political interest, a sense of power over the actions of government (political efficacy), media use, interpersonal

discussion, and levels of political information (e.g., Carmines, 1991; Cohen, Vigoda, & Samorty, 2001; McLeod, Scheufele, & Moy, 1999; McLeod et al., 1996; Scheufele & Eveland, 2001; Ulbig & Funk, 1999; Verba et al., 1995).

A great deal of attention has been paid to the predictors of voting—arguably the most direct way that a citizen can influence government. It is also the only truly private political activity that a person can engage in. Secret balloting allows citizens to avoid the social ramifications of their choices, as a voter is not obligated to share his or her preferences with anyone. As such, voting, as a form of opinion expression, is a relatively safe activity from a social psychological perspective. But political participation also includes a large collection of more overtly social acts that, we argue below, are riskier than voting, such as writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper, trying to persuade someone how to vote, or attending a protest or rally for a political candidate or cause. Such acts can be viewed as social because they entail an exchange (in writing, face-to-face, or otherwise) between the person engaging in the action and some audience—however small and abstract, intended or not. They can also be viewed as forms of public opinion expression, in that the act conveys information about one's opinions and beliefs to an audience. For instance, displaying a campaign sign in one's yard endorsing a particular candidate or issue position is a social statement about one's beliefs, and one that is publicly observable by others (e.g., the neighbors, the mail carrier, friends, anyone who happens to walk or drive by, etc.). Someone writing a letter to a government official cannot assume that the contents of the letter will be totally confidential, as many people other than the target of the communication are likely to be exposed to it. A protester can expect onlookers and media coverage and that the audience will ascribe the views of the collective to all members of the collective. Signing a petition is an act that is publicly observable expression of one's opinion to all who sign the petition after. Due to the rise of internet-based search systems such as FundRace.org or the Center for Responsive Politics, even a seemingly private act such as a financial donation to a political candidate allows for the possibility that publicly available records will give one away as a supporter of the candidate or cause. In short, with the exception of voting, all forms of political participation are social acts of opinion expression that set one up for potential scrutiny by an audience (intended or unintended) of some kind.

Political activities such as those described above almost invariably occur in a context in which there is the strong potential for conflict and disagreement. People get involved by participating in political activities in part due to dissatisfaction with the actions or inactions of elected officials or other members of government. The intended target of the activity (such as an elected official) may be hostile to the expression being directed at him or her, or the contents of that expression may run counter to his or her own beliefs and past behavior. People protest in part to demonstrate their disagreement with the actions of a governing body. People often write letters to elected officials or the editor of a newspaper to (among other reasons) complain about a politician's actions that are disagreeable. Even if the intended target can be expected to agree with the

opinion being expressed (such as the recipient of a political donation), political activities are, by their public nature, open to be perceived by a broader audience. The plurality and diversity of opinions in the public guarantees that this broader audience will contain people who disagree, who have different opinions, or who otherwise do not support the beliefs being communicated (c.f., Huckfeldt, Johnson, & Sprague, 2004). To be sure, political activities vary in how publicly observable they are, but with the exception of voting, they all share this common feature to some degree—they are public forms of opinion expression that are made in an environment that is, at least in part, hostile to that opinion.

The extent to which perceptions of the distribution of the climate of opinion can influence public behavior is an old question. Research using a variety of methodologies (e.g., Allen, 1965; Asch, 1951; Crutchfield, 1955; Deutsch & Gerard, 1955; Froming & Carver, 1981; Glynn, Hayes, & Shanahan, 1997; Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 1993; Morris & Miller, 1975; Mutz, 1997, 1998; Santee & Maslach, 1982; Scheufele & Moy, 2000) has shown that perceptions of others' beliefs, attitudes, or judgments can influence or are related to what people are willing to openly express about their own beliefs, attitudes, or judgments (see Mutz, 1998, for an overview and discussion of the boundary conditions of this effect, and Johnson, 2004, for a discussion of contextual influences on opinions). Recently, and more relevant to this study, there has been an increase in scholarly interest in the influence of opinion climates on political participation in its many forms (Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Mutz, 2002; Nir, 2005). This question, however, is also not new. Lazarsfeld, Berelson and Gaudet (1944) examined the influence of cross-pressures, i.e., factors that work against one's initial vote choice, including potentially hostile social networks and opinion climates, on voting. Their findings showed that "voters who were subject to cross-pressures on their vote decided later than the voters for whom the various factors reinforced one another" (p. 60). In other words, perceived differences between a person and his or her social environment had a significant impact on the timing and direction of their vote choice. But voting is only one form of political participation. More importantly, it is the least public form of participating on the political process. More recent research by Mutz (2002) suggests that the phenomenon may hold for a broader array of participatory behaviors. Using self-reports of the political differences between the respondent and his or her immediate discussion network, Mutz showed that a perceived hostile climate can have detrimental effects not only on decisiveness or the timing of a person's vote, but also on other forms of political participation (but see Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Nir, 2005, for recent contrary findings).

Nonparticipation as a Form of Self-Censorship

We argue that in a polarized, hostile political climate, some people decide not to participate in public forms of opinion expression because there may be

negative social ramifications of doing so. When we let other people know what we think, we set ourselves up for scrutiny, criticism, and perhaps even social ostracism. Harrison (1940) long ago argued that public opinion is not what people think, but what the public is willing to publicly acknowledge they think. In interviews of people living in Ithaca, New York, Rosenberg (1954–1955) found that many people's choices to not participate in political activities (such as political discussion) were guided by worries about the negative social costs, such as alienating themselves from their friends and neighbors, reducing their prospects for occupational promotion, or reducing social solidarity. And spiral of silence theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 1993) is predicated on the notion that people refrain from expressing their beliefs if they believe they are lacking in social support (see e.g., Glynn et al., 1997) because of a fear of being socially isolated from others. That is, self-silencing of one's opinion expression can be used as a means of impression management, where we avoid speaking our opinions in a hostile environment to avoid the negative social evaluations and rejection from others that can result from advocating an unpopular position.

There is an intuitively compelling truth to this argument. Anyone who has found themselves in disagreement with the majority of people around them appreciates the discomfort that this creates and the strong motivation to keep silent. Nevertheless, we are not all equally susceptible to such social pressures or as easily dissuaded from communicating our beliefs when others disagree. Early research on conformity shows that although conformity is a common response to social pressure, going against a majority and speaking one's convictions in spite of the lack of support is also relatively common (Asch, 1951; Crutchfield, 1955). Maslach, Stapp and Santee (1985) argue that people differ in their need to be perceived as unique and distinctive from others, and expressing a dissenting opinion can be an effective means of individuating oneself from others. Noelle-Neumann (1993, p. 215) acknowledged that there are individual differences that can influence a person's willingness to speak their opinion in a hostile climate, such as a person's susceptibility to embarrassment. And more recent research has suggested that individual differences such as dispositional fear of isolation also predict a person's willingness to speak their opinions in a potentially hostile public setting (Moy, Domke, & Stamm, 2001; Willnat, Lee, & Detenber, 2002). In short, there is ample reason to believe that some people, for one reason or another, consider the climate of opinion more so than others when deciding whether or not to voice their opinion publicly. Some say what they think regardless of what they believe others think, whereas others use information about the climate of opinion as one input into the decision to express an opinion publicly.

Hayes et al. (2005a) developed a measure of this individual difference—a construct they call “willingness to self-censor.” They define “self-censorship” as *the withholding of one's true opinion from an audience perceived to disagree with that opinion*, and they provide evidence that willingness to engage in self-censorship can be measured reliably, validly, and is distinguishable from conceptually related individual differences. The *Willingness to Self-Censor*

Scale includes eight statements to which the respondent indicates his or her level of agreement or disagreement on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) response scale. The measure includes such statements as “It is difficult for me to express my opinion if I think others won’t agree with what I say,” and “There have been many times when I thought others around me were wrong but I didn’t let them know.” A person’s willingness to self-censor is defined as their average response across the eight items, such that higher scores reflect a greater willingness to censor one’s own opinion expression in a hostile opinion climate. Evidence to date suggests that the Willingness to Self-Censor Scale is a valid measure of this individual difference, insofar as it is correlated with other individual differences that theory predicts it should be correlated with. For instance, people who score relatively high tend to be relatively less argumentative, fear negative evaluation by others to a greater extent, are more publicly self-conscious, lower in self-esteem, are more likely to look to others for guidance about how to behave, and are shyer than those who score lower on the scale (Hayes, Glynn, Shanahan, & Uldall, 2003, 2005a).¹ At the same time, confirmatory factor analyses indicate that the Willingness to Self-Censor scale is statistically distinguishable from measures of these related constructs. Moreover, experimental studies show that scores on the measure distinguish between those who are more versus less affected by the climate of opinion when choosing whether or not to express that opinion (Hayes, Glynn, & Shahanan, 2005b).

As a form of opinion expression, political participation—more specifically the *failure* to engage in political activity—can be construed as a form of self-censorship by Hayes et al.’s (2005a) definition if the decision is guided by perceptions of the climate of opinion. Most people have ample opportunity to engage in political activity, but some people may choose not to engage in this form of opinion expression if there are perceived risks associated with that participation. Such risks are no doubt higher when there is the possibility that some will disagree with the opinion being expressed, and as we discussed above, such disagreements are almost guaranteed in the realm of political issues. Thus, a failure to participate in political activity that leaves one’s opinions open to public scrutiny is in effect an act of self-censorship, in which

¹ Willingness to self-censor should not be confused with a related construct, “self-monitoring,” which refers to “self-observation and self-control guided by situational cues to social appropriateness” (Snyder, 1974). Self-monitors may choose self-censorship as a behavioral strategy in some contexts, but self-censors are not necessarily self-monitors, at least as defined by Snyder. Indeed, data collected during the development of the willingness to self-censor scale reveals no linear association between the two ($r = 0.02$, $n = 353$ college students). Scores on the willingness to self-censor scale have been correlated ($n = 156$ college students) with the four subscales of Lennox and Wolfe’s (1984) *revised self-monitoring scale*, designed to overcome some of the limitations of Snyder’s conceptualization and measurement of self-monitoring. Respondents high on the willingness to self-censor scale also tend to score relatively high on the “attention to social comparison information” (Hayes et al., 2003) and “cross-situational variability in behavior” dimensions, but there was no systematic relationship between willingness to self-censor and “acting ability” and “ability to modify self-presentation.”

a person considers the opinion climate, the social costs of public opinion expression, and subsequently chooses the “safer” course of nonparticipation.

In the study reported here, we tested the viability of this interpretation of nonparticipation by examining the relationship between willingness to self-censor and participation in publicly observable political activity. Our argument predicts that this relationship should be negative. People who are reticent to express their opinions in a hostile opinion climate should engage in fewer publicly observable political activities in the polarized and divisive political climate that existed in the United States at the time of study. We test this hypothesis using data from telephone survey of U.S. residents that included the eight items on the willingness to self-censor scale as well as several questions asking respondents about their recent political activity.

A negative relationship between willingness to self-censor and participation is open to alternative explanations, however, such as the possibility that willingness to self-censor and political participation share common causes or may simply be epiphenomenally correlated through some unidentified mechanism. To minimize the plausibility of this interpretation, we assessed the relationship after statistically partialing out many of the usual predictors of political participation, including some known or likely to be correlated with willingness to self-censor.

In their seminal study of participation in America, Verba and Nie (1972) outlined what they called the “socioeconomic model,” emphasizing the importance of socioeconomic status as a key antecedent of participation. Since then, researchers in political science, sociology, and communication have examined a variety of pathways to political participation—pathways that suggest statistical control variables. The first group includes standard *demographic variables*. In addition to education (e.g., Nie, Junn, & Stehlik-Barry, 1996), previous research has identified age (e.g., Scheufele, Nisbet, Brossard, & Nisbet, 2004), race (e.g., Verba et al., 1995), and gender (e.g., Schlozman, Burns, & Verba, 1994) as predictors of participation, the latter of which is also known to be related to willingness to self-censor (Hayes et al., 2005a). The second group of variables can be labeled *political orientations*. Key variables in this group include political interest (i.e., Verba et al., 1995), political ideology and ideological extremity (i.e., Scheufele, Nisbet, & Brossard, 2003), and political efficacy (McLeod et al., 1999). Of these variables, political efficacy is a particularly important control because there is evidence that both are correlated with general self-esteem (Carmines, 1991; Cohen et al., 2001; Hayes et al., 2005a) and thus likely share a common cause that could produce a spurious association. We also include *informational channels* as controls. Previous research has identified mass mediated and interpersonal information channels as critical predictors of participation (for an overview, see McLeod et al., 1999), operationalized in this study as attention to political news and frequency of political discussion, the latter being especially relevant because people who self-censor may refrain from political discussion with anyone, and there is evidence that people who engage in more frequent political discussion

also tend to engage in other forms of political activity more frequently (e.g., Scheufele, 2000).

Because political participation is a social activity by its nature, it is possible that a person's dispositional anxiety or discomfort in social situations may reduce a person's willingness—and ultimately their tendency—to engage in political activity. Such dispositional anxiety and discomfort in social situations is generally referred to as “shyness” (e.g., Cheek & Buss, 1981). Importantly, willingness to self-censor is correlated with shyness—self-censors tend to be relatively more shy than those less willing to self-censor (Hayes et al., 2005a). Any relationship between willingness to self-censor and political participation might therefore be spurious due to their shared relationship with dispositional shyness. So we included a measure of shyness in the survey and used it as an additional statistical control.

Method

Participants

The participants were 781 adult residents of the United States who were interviewed over the telephone by a university-based survey research institute. Respondents were contacted with the use of a nationally representative household telephone list and selected by requesting the cooperation of the person in the household who had the most recent birthday and who was also at least 18 years of age. The response rate was 60%, defined as the percent of people who were contacted and deemed eligible who ultimately completed the interview. Because of missing data, not all participants were included in the data analysis. We discuss our treatment of missing data at the beginning of the results section. Statistics reported in the measurement section below are based on the cases retained after exclusion of cases with missing data.

Measurement

The interview included 37 questions relevant to this study that produced data included in analyses. In the following sections we detail these questions. Table 1 presents a matrix of correlations between all the variables included in the analysis.

Political Participation

To measure a person's engagement in public political activity, we used responses to a set of questions the participants were asked about their political behavior. Specifically, they were asked if, *during the last 2 years*, they had (a) attended a meeting related to politics, (b) written a letter to a newspaper editor or called into a public affairs radio talk show, (c) circulated a petition for a candidate or issue, (d) worked for a political campaign, (e) contacted a

Table 1 Matrix of intercorrelations (Pearson's r) between measured variables

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
(1) White												
(2) Male	-.09*											
(3) Age	.20**	-.07+										
(4) Education	.04	.13**	-.09*									
(5) Political interest	.01	.09*	.20**	.17**								
(6) Political efficacy	.07+	.09*	-.10*	.29**	.12**							
(7) Political ideology	.10*	.07+	.13**	-.09*	.08+	.01						
(8) Ideological extremity	.07+	.01	.06	.07+	.14**	.04	.16**					
(9) Political news attention	-.01	.02	.27**	.10*	.62**	.08+	.03	.11**				
(10) Political discussion freq	.00	.10*	-.10*	.21**	.39**	.14**	.02	.15**	.30**			
(11) Shyness	-.02	-.03	.03	-.12**	-.09*	-.07+	.03	-.02	-.09*	-.02		
(12) Willingness to self-censor	.05	-.08*	.19**	-.15**	-.06+	-.16**	.08*	-.08*	-.04	-.19**	.35**	
(13) Political activity	-.02	.13**	.12**	.29**	.33**	.15**	.03	.16**	.32**	.41**	-.14**	-.20**

+ $p < .10$, * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, $n = 667$

public official, (f) called other people to raise funds for a political organization, (g) contributed money to a political organization or candidate, or (h) persuaded someone to vote either for or against a particular candidate running for a political office. Participants responded either yes, no, or don't know to each question. The number of "yes" responses were summed to produce a reliable scale ($M = 1.67$, $SD = 1.78$, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.70$) that we will refer to throughout this manuscript as *political participation* or *political activity*.

Willingness to Self-Censor

The focal independent variable in the analysis, willingness to self-censor (WTSC), was measured with the Willingness to Self-Censor Scale (Hayes et al., 2005a) described in the introduction. The precise wording of the eight items on the scale can be found in the Appendix. The internal consistency in our sample was acceptable and consistent with prior research on the psychometric properties of the measure (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$). Higher scores represent a greater willingness to withhold one's opinion expression around an audience perceived to be hostile to that opinion ($M = 2.57$, $SD = 0.70$).

Political Efficacy

We used three items commonly used to measure political efficacy: "People like me have no say in what the federal government does," "Sometimes national politics and government seem so complicated that a person like me cannot really understand what is going on," and "National officials don't

care much what people like me think.” Respondents indicated their level of agreement with the item on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 10 (strongly agree) scale. Responses were transformed by subtracting them from 11, such that higher scores reflect greater feelings of power or control over government actions. Responses to these items were intercorrelated (r s between 0.21 and 0.42) and therefore aggregated into a single measure defined as the respondent’s mean response to the three items ($M = 6.01$, $SD = 2.07$, Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.62$).

Political Interest

Political interest was measured by asking respondents to rate their interest in “National issues and politics” on a 1 (not at all interested) to 10 (very interested) scale ($M = 6.18$, $SD = 2.70$).

Political Ideology

Political ideology was assessed with two questions: “In terms of social issues and people’s behavior, would you say you are...” and “In terms of economic issues, would you say you are...” with responses provided on a 1 (very liberal) to 7 (very conservative) scale, with the middle option of “moderate” scored as a 4. Responses to these two items were moderately correlated ($r = 0.57$), so they were aggregated into a single political ideology score, defined as the respondent’s mean on the two questions ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.40$, Cronbach’s $\alpha = 0.73$). Higher scores reflect a more conservative political ideology.

Ideological Extremity

Ideological extremity was constructed as the absolute value of the distance between a respondent’s political ideology and 4, the midpoint of the ideology scale. Thus, this variable could range between 0 and 3, with higher values reflecting a political ideology that either more liberal or conservative in either direction ($M = 1.13$, $SD = 0.84$).

Attention to Political News

Responses to four questions were used to produce a scale of attention to political news. Respondents were asked “When you come across the following stories in the newspaper, how much attention do you pay to?” with the question ending with “national government and politics?” or “the 2004 presidential campaign?” Two additional questions asked about attention to the same content in televised news. Responses were provided on a 0 (never pay attention) to 10 (very close attention) scale. Participants who reported that they never read the newspaper were given a “0” on the two newspaper attention questions. Responses to these questions were moderately to strongly intercorrelated (r s between 0.30 and 0.74), so they were aggregated into a

single index of attention to political news, defined as the respondent's mean response (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.80$). Higher scores reflect greater attention ($M = 5.39$, $SD = 2.55$).

Political Discussion Frequency

Respondents were asked to indicate how often they talk about political issues or candidates with (a) people at work, (b) neighbors, (c) men, (d) women, (e) family members, and (f) people at a nonchurch community or volunteer group. Responses were provided on a 1 (never) to 10 (all the time) scale. Responses to these items were positively correlated (r s between 0.23 and 0.49) sufficiently to justify aggregating them into a single index of political discussion frequency, defined as the average response across the 6 items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.78$, $M = 4.22$, $SD = 1.88$).

Shyness

Unfortunately, all existing measures of shyness are quite lengthy, precluding us from including every question on shyness measures that are well established and accepted as valid. So we measured shyness using a single question from the Cheek and Buss's revised Shyness index (Cheek & Buss, 1981; Robinson, Shaver, & Wrightsman, 1991) to which respondents indicated their agreement on a 5 point scale (1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree). The statement read "I feel tense when I am with people I don't know well." This item was selected because it correlated highly with the total score both with ($r = 0.76$) and without ($r = 0.55$) the item when all 13 shyness items were asked to a sample of 1735 undergraduate students that were used in the development and validation of the Willingness to Self-Censor Scale (Hayes et al., 2005a). Furthermore, this item has strong face validity with Cheek and Buss's conceptualization of shyness as "discomfort and inhibition that may occur in the presence of others." Although we could not estimate the reliability of this single-item measure of shyness, the strong correlation between responses to this item and the total scale suggests it is probably a reasonably valid "short form" of the Cheek and Buss Shyness index ($M = 2.63$, $SD = 1.21$).²

² The questions described in this paper are only a small subset of the questions asked to each participant during the telephone interview. There were several investigators competing for interviewer time, and both time and financial constraints limited the number of questions we could include for the purpose of this study. We did conduct an analysis described by Kline (1998, pp. 264–266) similar to the one described in the Results section in which we accounted for the lower reliability in measurement produced as a result of using only a single indicator of shyness. In this procedure we estimated reliability of a latent shyness variable operationalized with our single indicator to be 0.90 using data from the college student sample and treated the other variables as manifest in a linear structural equation model estimating political participation. Even after accounting for increased measurement error, the substantive results were the same.

Demographics

In addition to the above variables, we statistically controlled for a number of standard demographic variables: sex, age, education, and ethnic identity. Participants were asked their sex (45% male) and their age in years on their last birthday ($M = 49.30$, $SD = 16.64$). Education was solicited with a question about the highest grade the respondent had completed ($M = 14.71$ years, $SD = 2.87$). Ethnic category was coded as white or not white using responses to a question about ethnic identity (86% identified themselves as white).³

Results

Missing Data

Of the 781 participants, 627 (80%) responded to every question, meaning that 20% of the participants were missing at least some data.⁴ To reduce the amount of data discarded, we used a series of rules for including cases that may have been missing on some but not all of the variables measured. First, we excluded 25 participants who did not respond to all eight of the participation items. Because this is the outcome variable in the analysis, these respondents were excluded from the data entirely rather than attempting to impute their missing data or produce a quantification of their participation that accounted for their nonresponse to some questions that would be difficult to interpret. Second, several of the predictors variables were aggregates of multiple indicator variables (willingness to self-censor, political discussion, political efficacy, attention to political news, political ideology, and ideological extremity), and we decided to retain cases if they failed to respond to no more than a single question in the measure. For such cases, we used the average of their responses to the questions they did answer in the construction of the aggregate. This rule resulted in the deletion of an additional 68 respondents. Third, we discarded 21 respondents missing at least one response on the remaining variables. This resulted in a total of 667 participants that were subjected to analysis (85% of the total sample). Of course, it is well known that listwise deletion is not an ideal strategy for handling missing data (e.g., Allison, 2002). At the end of the results section we describe a couple of analyses we undertook to assess the vulnerability of our conclusions to missing data.

³ Income is frequently controlled for in studies of political participation but we did not include it in our analyses because of the large number of respondents ($n = 120$) who chose not to provide their income during the interview. In one analysis not reported here we did include income as a predictor variable. Controlling for income did not substantively change the results.

⁴ When “don’t know” options were provided, these were treated as refusals and coded as missing.

Analysis

We proposed that the choice to not participate in publicly observable political activity can be construed as a form of self-censorship, where a person refrains from engaging in activity in which one's opinions can be observed by a potentially hostile audience. As such, public political activity should be predictable from individual tendencies to self-censor. Furthermore, willingness to self-censor should predict individual differences in political participation independent of other constructs that it may be correlated with that also predict participation.

Looking at the zero-order correlation between political participation and willingness to self-censor (Table 1), it is apparent that, as expected, respondents who reported a greater reluctance to express their opinions around a hostile audience did in fact report engaging in fewer publicly observable political activities. However, an examination of Table 1 shows that willingness to self-censor was also correlated with a number of other individual differences that are also correlated with political activity. Compared to respondents who scored lower on the willingness to self-censor scale, higher scorers were less educated, older, more likely to be female, lower in political self-efficacy, shyer, discuss politics less frequently, and more middle-of-the-road in political ideology, variables which were also correlated with public political participation.

To examine the partial relationship between willingness to self-censor and political participation, we estimated political participation from willingness to self-censor in a multiple negative binomial regression model. Negative binomial regression is more appropriate than ordinary least squares regression in this case because the outcome is a limited (i.e., constrained to be no less than zero) count variable. OLS regression does not recognize this measurement constraint and can yield estimates that are less than zero. Furthermore, the errors in an OLS model of count data tend to be heteroscedastic. Hypothesis tests in OLS in the presence of heteroscedasticity can yield biased estimates of standard errors, thereby invalidating hypothesis tests or producing hypothesis tests with reduced statistical power (see e.g., Long & Ervin, 2000). Hypothesis tests stemming from OLS estimation also assume the conditional distribution of Y is normal, an assumption which is often unrealistic regardless of the outcome variable but patently false when modeling count outcomes. Negative binomial regression eliminates these problems of OLS analysis of counts by modeling the conditional mean of the outcome as a linear combination of the predictors, as in OLS regression, but using an error structure that is discrete rather than assumed to be continuous and normal and has an expected conditional variance that is correlated with the estimated outcome from the regression model. Furthermore, negative binomial regression model cannot yield an estimated count less than zero

Table 2 Simple and multiple negative binomial regression results estimating political participation

	Zero-order			Partial		
	<i>b</i>	se(<i>b</i>)	Δ <i>E</i> %	<i>b</i>	se(<i>b</i>)	Δ <i>E</i> %
White	-0.062	0.125	-6.1	-0.176	0.108	-16.1
Male	0.266**	0.086	30.5	0.117	0.074	12.3
Age	0.008**	0.003	14.3	0.010***	0.002	17.8
Education	0.109***	0.015	36.9	0.066***	0.014	20.9
Political interest	0.143***	0.016	47.1	0.035+	0.018	9.7
Political efficacy	0.079***	0.021	17.8	0.013	0.019	2.7
Political ideology	0.018	0.030	2.5	0.008	0.026	1.1
Ideological extremity	0.192***	0.050	17.6	0.062	0.044	5.3
Political news attention	0.143***	0.017	44.1	0.052**	0.019	14.1
Political discussion freq	0.249***	0.022	59.7	0.176***	0.023	39.2
Shyness	-0.128***	0.037	-14.4	-0.069*	0.033	-8.1
Willingness to self-censor	-0.325***	0.063	-20.3	-0.164**	0.059	-10.9
Constant				-1.840***	0.320	
Dispersion parameter (<i>α</i>)				0.215***	0.051	
				Pseudo- <i>R</i> ² = 0.099***		

+ *p* < 0.10, * *p* < .05, ** *p* < .01, *** *p* < .001, *n* = 667

All regression weights (*b*) are unstandardized. With the exception of “Male,” and “White” Δ*E*% is the percentage increase (+) or decrease (–) in the expected number of political acts associated with a one standard deviation increase in the predictor holding all other predictors constant. For “Male,” and “White” Δ*E*% is the percentage difference in the expected number of political acts between males and females (white/nonwhites), holding everything else constant.

because it assumes that the distribution of the outcome is Poisson—a much more realistic probability distribution for count data.⁵

Table 2 displays the partial negative binomial regression coefficients estimating political activity from each of the predictor variables described above. For completeness, we also display the simple negative binomial regression weights, estimating political activity from each predictor variable separately. These coefficients can be interpreted after exponentiation (i.e., raising *e* to the power of the coefficient) as the factor increase or decrease in expected number of acts of political participation as the predictor variable increases by one unit (holding all other predictors constant in the case of multiple predictors). Thus, a positive coefficient means that two people who differ by one unit on the predictor (but are equal on the other predictors when multiple predictors are in the model) are expected to differ by a factor of *e^b* in their estimated number of political acts, with the person scoring higher on the

⁵ Negative binomial regression is very similar to Poisson regression, except that negative binomial regression includes a dispersion parameter that allows the conditional variance to differ from the conditional mean. Poisson regression is a special case of negative binomial regression in which the dispersion parameter is zero. In our model, the dispersion parameter (using the *mean dispersion* model) was statistically different from zero, indicating negative binomial regression was more appropriate than Poisson regression. For details on the differences between Poisson and negative binomial regression, see Gardner, Mulvey and Shaw (1995) or Long (1997). We did also estimate the model using Poisson regression and the substantive results were the same.

predictor estimated to engage in more political acts. A negative coefficient is interpreted conversely, with the person scoring *higher* on the predictor expected to engage in fewer political acts. In Table 2 we also provide the expected percentage difference in political activity ($\Delta E\%$) between two cases who differ by *one standard deviation* on the predictor variable. Specifically, $\Delta E\% = 100(e^\beta - 1)$ where β is the negative binomial regression coefficient after standardizing the predictor or predictors (Long, 1997, p. 225, 237). Note that β is *not* the conceptual equivalent of the standardized regression coefficient in OLS because the outcome variable is not standardized.

Looking first at the zero-order negative binomial regression weight for willingness to self-censor, it is clear that the self-censors (i.e., those who scored relatively high on the WTSC scale) were less politically active. The higher a person's willingness to self-censor, the fewer political activities the person reported having engaged in, $b = -0.325$, $p < .001$, $\Delta E\% = -20.3$. Rephrased, if Person A is one standard deviation higher on the willingness to self-censor scale than person B, person A is expected to have reported engaging in about 20% *fewer* political activities from the list. The partial regression weight for willingness to self-censor shows that this negative relationship was neither spurious nor ephiphenomenal as a result of the shared relationship between willingness to self-censor and the other predictors of political activity we measured. Even after controlling for sex, age, education, ethnic identity, political interest, political efficacy, political ideology, ideological extremity, attention to political news, frequency of political discussion, and dispositional shyness, the relationship between willingness to self-censor and political participation remained negative and statistically different from zero, partial $b = -0.164$, $p < .01$, $\Delta E\% = -10.9$.⁶

Vulnerability to Missing Data

We lost about 15% of the sample using the missing data rules described earlier. At an individual variable level, the variable with the most missing data was political ideology, with 9.6% of cases missing. To assess the extent to which missingness might be distorting the relationship we found between willingness to self-censor and political participation, we undertook two analyses. Our goal was to assess whether the negative relationship might be spuriously large as a result of the deletion of missing cases. The first concern was the possibility that we may have systematically excluded self-censors who were politically active, or people low in self-censoring tendencies who were politically inactive. Unfortunately, besides the obvious problem of calculating an association between two variables when people are missing on at least one, the very process that we are studying could lead someone to be missing on both, making this a difficult question to answer. For instance, people who were politically

⁶ We did conduct a corresponding OLS regression. As would be expected, the OLS estimation errors were heteroscedastic using the Breusch–Pagan test, $\chi^2(1) = 64.46$, $p < .0001$. Nevertheless, the substantive results were the same as produced by negative binomial regression.

inactive may have not been comfortable admitting so, but those same people may have also been reluctant to answer questions about their reluctance to express their opinions, which is in part what the Willingness to Self-Censor scale assesses. Indeed, including all 781 participants in the analysis, there was evidence that participants missing on willingness to self-censor were also more likely to be missing on the political participation index, $\chi^2(1) = 100.23$, $p < .001$. However, this can be parsimoniously attributed to individual differences in a general tendency to refuse to answer or say “I don’t know,” to any question rather than nonresponse to these specific questions. To assess this, we constructed a variable quantifying the number of predictor variables in the model the person was missing on, *excluding willingness to self-censor*, and we then partialled this “general missingness” index out of the association between missingness on political participation and missingness on willingness to self-censor in a logistic regression. Although general missingness was positively related to missing status on political participation in this analysis ($p < 0.001$), there was no partial association between missing status on political participation and missing status on willingness to self-censor ($p = 0.56$). However, even if the association persisted, it is clear that excluding such people could actually be conservative. That is, if the process we described above is at work, had we been able to include low participators who are high in willingness to self-censor, the negative relationship between willingness to self-censor and political participation would actually be stronger.

Another concern is the possibility that the exclusion of missing cases may have resulted in poor estimation of the intercorrelations between predictor variables in the model, yielding an estimation bias of some sort in the regression analysis leading to a spurious association between willingness to self-censor and participation. Most important was whether there was an association between either political participation or willingness to self-censor (among those who were not missing) and missing status on any of the control variables, as well as between missing status on willingness to self-censor or participation and the predictor variables. That would be consistent with the possibility that missingness was not completely at random (although it would not necessarily imply nonignorable missingness). Again returning all 781 participants to the data, there was an association between missing status on some of the predictors and scores (among those not missing) on the political participation index. Less politically active respondents were less likely to report their age, ethnic status, and attention to political news. Furthermore, participants missing on the willingness to self-censor scale were older and less educated and reported less frequent political discussion.

To assess the vulnerability of our primary finding to *ignorable* missingness, we estimated the model coefficients using Full Information Maximum Likelihood as implemented in M-Plus v3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2005). There were only two substantive differences. First, the nonsignificant association between sex and participation became statistically significant, with males reporting higher participation. Second, the nonsignificant association between ideological extremity and participation was significant, with respondents with a more

extreme political ideology reporting greater participation. Importantly, the association between willingness to self-censor and participation remained negative and statistically significant.⁷

Discussion

In this article, we argue that most forms of political participation amount to public expression of one's opinions. Furthermore, political activity is a risky endeavor, in that there is every possibility that someone on the receiving end of this expression, whether or not the person or group was the intended audience, will have a different belief or opinion. With this possibility in mind, someone who chooses not to participate is engaging in a form of self-censorship, as defined by Hayes et al. (2005a). We tested this construal of political nonparticipation by examining if people who are relatively less willing to express their opinions in a hostile environment are less likely to engage in publicly observable political activities. The results supported our interpretation of political nonparticipation. Even after controlling for potentially spurious influences and other known predictors of political behavior, people who reported a greater willingness to refrain from speaking their opinions around others likely to disagree reported engaging in fewer political activities that open their opinions to public view and scrutiny.⁸

Although our findings are consistent with our interpretation that political nonparticipation is a form of self-censorship, it is important to caution against overinterpretation of our findings in a number of ways. First, the partial regression coefficient for willingness to self-censor can be interpreted to mean that, all other things held constant, people who are prone to greater self-censorship engage in relatively fewer political activities. But of course, not everything has been held constant—only those things that are included in the regression model have been. No doubt there are many other things that we could control for but have not. For instance, our interpretation of the results rests on the assumption that everyone in our sample has had equal

⁷ Although M-plus has implemented FIML for linear models, it has not for negative binomial regression or Poisson regression. The comparisons we make here are between the coefficients for a linear regression using maximum likelihood estimation and the negative binomial regression reported in Table 2 based on listwise deletion, as well as between an OLS regression using listwise deletion and one using FIML. As noted in footnote 6, OLS regression and negative binomial regression produced substantively identical results, so this comparison seems relevant. Unfortunately, we have no clear and sensible model for nonignorable missingness, and there are few statistical algorithms implemented in software to handle the nonignorable case.

⁸ If this explanation is correct, then there should be no relationship between willingness to self-censor and engaging in private political activity, such as voting. We did include a question in the survey asking respondents whether they voted for an elected official in the last 2 years. Consistent with our argument, in a multiple logistic regression there was no statistically significant relationship between willingness to self-censor and voting (partialling out the same covariates). This is the only question about political activity we asked that could be unequivocally construed as private.

opportunity to participate. For example, it is possible that self-censors, for some reason or through some mechanism unmeasured in this study, tend to have less established social networks—networks that encourage further participation. The fact that the negative relationship between willingness to self-censor and participation persists even after partially out political discussion frequency renders this interpretation less plausible, but it can't be entirely ruled out.

Second, the willingness to self-censor scale does not capture the *reasons* why people choose to self-censor. It only measures a person's general willingness versus reticence to speak opinions in a hostile opinion environment. Just what might be the motivations for this form of self-censorship? As Wyatt, Katz, Levinsohn and Al-Haj (1996) observed, there are many reasons that people feel uncomfortable speaking their opinions in public, but those that seem most important in people's decisions involve the social outcomes of that expression. We speculate that two of the primary motivations for political self-censorship are social in nature: aversion to conflict and a general worry about one's impression in the public eye.

Because most people do not have time or the resources to witness politics in person, much of what is known about politics is learned through media coverage and interpersonal discussion. Past research has shown that the media portrays the political arena as particularly hostile. In the 2000 and 2004 U.S. Presidential campaigns, for instance, even the most detached political observer could not help but notice the tremendous antagonism and negativity in the campaign. Cappella and Jamieson (1997) detail the process by which citizens may come to view politics in a cynical manner. This result, they claim, is partially due to the fact that politics is often presented in what they refer to as an "oppositional" frame, whereby conflict and debate are emphasized by presenting colliding viewpoints (also see Tannen, 1998). It is no secret that in the media, "what bleeds leads." Though this oppositional coverage is often attributed to journalistic balance (i.e., appearing unbiased by telling both sides of the story), the audience, overall, seems to pay more attention to the conflict. In short, stories presented in the oppositional frame are seen as argument summaries rather than pieces of an ongoing, deliberative process. Therefore, it does not seem like much of a leap to infer that politics is seen by most as having an inherently oppositional and argumentative quality. Thus, people may refrain from political activity because participation increases the likelihood of becoming involved in some kind of conflict or argument with others. Consistent with this interpretation, Ulbig and Funk (1999) found that those who were high in "conflict avoidance," were less likely to participate in certain political activities. If people perceive politics having an inherent hostility built in, it makes sense that those who wish to avoid conflict would be much less likely to engage in political activities that might instigate such conflict. Research on the willingness to self-censor construct has also shown that people who score relatively high also tend to score high on measures of aversion to argumentation. In short, political activity is not likely to be attractive to people who prefer not get involved in anything that is likely to lead to interpersonal disharmony.

Similarly, Noelle-Neumann's spiral of silence theory (Noelle-Neumann, 1974, 1993) is predicated on the assumption that people self-censor because they worry about how their opinion expression will reflect on themselves in the public eye. Research on the fear of isolation mechanism suggests that people who worry about appearing strange or deviant and being rejected by those around them do tend to feel less comfortable speaking their opinions publicly (e.g., Wilnat, Lee, & Detenber, 2002). Hayes et al. (2005a) also report in their work on the development of the willingness to self-censor scale that people who are relatively high in self-censoring tendencies also score high on measures related to worries about one's public image (such as fear of negative evaluation and public self-consciousness). Political participation, as a form of opinion expression, leaves one open to potential scrutiny, criticism, and social ostracism by observers of that expression, and people who worry more than others about such possible outcomes may take the less risky path of keeping their opinions to themselves by not participating in political activities that leave them vulnerable to ridicule and ostracism.

By offering an explanation for nonparticipation that is largely dispositional and holds after controlling for established predictors of participatory behavior, this research connects many strands of literature: Lazarsfeld et al.'s research on cross-pressures and voting, Mutz's (2002) more recent work on cross-cutting networks, Noelle-Neumann's (1993) spiral of silence theory, and Huckfeldt et al.'s (2004) research on diversity in opinion networks, all of which rely on the assumption of some form of social discomfort that is caused by exposure to nonlikeminded others. None of these researchers, however, pay much attention to the strong likelihood that there are individual differences in the effects of disagreement and diversity in one's immediate social network on opinion expression and political participation. That is, past researchers have made the tacit assumption that diversity of opinions in one's social networks has the potential to affect everyone. Our data our consistent with the argument that disagreement and diversity in opinions likely affect some people's decisions about whether or not to participate more than it does others.

At the beginning of this manuscript we made the case that with the exception of voting, most forms of political participation amount to public displays of opinion to some degree. However, some forms of participation are certainly more "public" than others. Our argument would predict that the degree of publicness of the behavior should moderate the relationship between willingness to self-censor and participation. Specifically, the size of relationship between willingness to self-censor and participation should itself be positively correlated with the publicness of the behavior. This, of course, is an empirical question. Future research should therefore examine this question, but not before first clearly operationalizing and empirically measuring the "publicness" of each behavior, and perhaps their "riskiness" as well. Such attempts at operationalization must be undertaken carefully. For instance, "publicness" can be defined in a number of different ways, such as the likelihood that the behavior can be observed by someone, the size of the pool of

potential observers, or the informativeness of the action with respect to the opinions of the actor. The “riskiness” of the behavior pertains to the likelihood of negative interpersonal consequences resulting from the behavior such as social rejection or conflict. For instance, writing a letter to the editor of the local newspaper is public, more so for newspapers with greater circulation, but less so if the content does not allow the reader to infer the author’s opinion. The more local the newspaper (e.g., a suburban newspaper circulating in the author’s community compared to a large metropolitan or national paper), the riskier it could be to express an opinion through a letter, as the bulk of the audience would consist of nearby residents more likely to be in a position to administer sanctions if the opinion expressed runs counter to a regional norm. Clearly, to test such a hypothesis through survey methods the researcher must be very careful in deciding which forms of participation to ask about and how to word the questions (c.f. Mutz, 2002, footnote 8).⁹

The title of this paper suggests that the inverse relationship between willingness to self-censor and participation is a phenomenon restricted to polarized political climates. But is there reason to restrict the process we are describing to opinion climates that are equally split along ideological lines? Might dispositional self-censors refrain from participating even in an opinion climate that is friendly to their position? On the one hand, there would seem to be a reduced likelihood of conflict or social rejection if the opinions expressed through participation are in line with regional, local norms and thus less reason to avoid participation. On the other hand, the audience of publicly observable forms of opinion expression will almost always contain at least *some* opponents of the position being expressed, so there is reason to believe that self-censorship through nonparticipation could exist even when the distribution of opinion is heavily slanted in one’s direction, depending on who the opponents are, where they are located in one’s social network, and their ability to administer social sanctions. Intuitively, it would seem that the relationship we have documented would be strongest when the absolute number of opponents of the opinion being expressed is large and weaker as their number declines. One interesting extension of this study would be to use community and individual level data to ascertain whether specific forms of participation involving specific opinion issues are enhanced or inhibited differentially as a function of the joint distribution of opinion measured at the local level (i.e., community or neighborhood) and willingness to self-censor measured at the individual level.

Finally, we want to acknowledge the difficulty of disentangling willingness to self-censor, as a cross-situational tendency to avoid opinion expression in hostile opinion climates, from other related but more general individual differences, such as a general inclination to avoid social situations entirely. We made the point at the beginning of this paper that most public forms of

⁹ The participation questions on the survey were designed by a different investigator with a different purpose and aren’t precisely worded enough for us to examine this question empirically in these data.

political participation can be construed as social acts of opinion expression. As such, nearly any individual difference correlated with shyness or social anxiety is likely to be correlated with public forms of participation. Although there is evidence that willingness to self-censor, as measured here, is statistically distinguishable from (Hayes et al., 2005a) and shows effects independent of (Hayes et al., 2005b, and this paper) shyness, they are highly correlated, probably inextricably so. Thus, future researchers using this measure (either in attempts to replicate or to extend our findings) would be well-advised to measure shyness as well, preferably with more than a single item, in order to make an even stronger case that effects attributed to a self-censoring personality style are not simply the result of a reticence to speak, interact, or participate in *any* social situation or activity.

In closing, our data support our claim that nonparticipation in public political activities amounts to a form of self-censorship, where some but certainly not all people consider the climate of opinion and the social ramifications of participation prior to action. Our data are consistent with our argument that self-censors may want to participate but worry so much so about the social consequences of expressing opinions that others might find disagreeable or offensive that they choose nonparticipation as the safer course.

Appendix

Items on the willingness to self-censor scale (Hayes et al., 2005a). Responses are made on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale, anchored in the middle by “neither agree nor disagree”.

- (1) It is difficult for me to express my opinion if I think others won't agree with what I say.
- (2) There have been many times when I have thought others around me were wrong but I didn't let them know.
- (3) When I disagree with others, I'd rather go along with them than argue about it.
- (4) It is easy for me to express my opinion around others who I think will disagree with me. (R)
- (5) I'd feel uncomfortable if someone asked my opinion and I knew he or she wouldn't agree with me.
- (6) I tend to speak my opinion only around friends or other people I trust.
- (7) It is safer to keep quiet than publicly speak an opinion that you know most others don't share.
- (8) If I disagree with others, I have no problem letting them know it (R)

R = reverse scored

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