

Political Chameleons: An Exploration of Conformity in Political Discussions

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Abstract Individuals do not always express their private political opinions in front of others who disagree. Neither political scientists nor psychologists have been able to firmly establish why this behavior occurs. Previous research has explored, at length, social influence on political attitudes and persuasion. However, the concept of conformity does not involve attitude change or persuasion; it more accurately involves self-censoring to match a socially desirable norm. In an effort to improve our understanding of this behavior, we conduct two experiments to investigate perceptions and behavioral responses to contentious political interactions. Study 1 asked participants to predict how a hypothetical character would respond to a variety of political interactions among coworkers. In Study 2, participants discussed political issues with confederates who were scripted to disagree with them. The studies reveal that individuals are uncomfortable around political interactions in which they hold an opinion counter to the group. Participants both expected a hypothetical character to conform in Study 1 and actually conformed themselves in the lab session in Study 2.

Keywords Conformity · Discussion · Contention · Politics · Opinions

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Introduction

The American political environment is both social (Berelson et al. 1954; Campbell et al. 1960; Giuseffi et al. 2013; Katz and Lazarsfeld 1955; Lazarsfeld et al. 1968; Mondak 2010; Putnam 2001; Settle et al. 2011; Sinclair 2012; Zuckerman 2005) and polarized (Abramowitz 2010; Abramowitz and Saunders 2008; Bafumi and Shapiro 2009; Haidt and Hetherington 2012; Hetherington and Weiler 2009; Iyengar et al. 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Mason 2013, 2015). As the political divisions in American society become increasingly salient and entangled in our social lives, decisions about what political information to disclose to others becomes even more delicate, as sharing even non-political information may reveal likely political preferences. For example, indicating a preference for imported beer like Guinness or Heineken over domestic beer like Budweiser or Miller can signal liberal political ideology (Khan et al. 2013). Liberals and conservatives have been shown to differ in their dating (Klofstad et al. 2012), art (Wilson 1973), food, pet, and movie preferences (Haidt 2014; Haidt and Wilson 2014). Sharing one's opinions may be especially risky because of the increasingly hostile attitudes individuals have toward out-party members (Iyengar et al. 2012; Iyengar and Westwood 2015; Mason 2015) and increased levels of partisan bias and anger (Abramowitz 2006, 2010; Abramowitz and Saunders 1998, 2005; Levendusky 2009; Mason 2013). Individuals must choose between sharing their true political opinions, a modified version of their opinions (Cialdini et al. 1973; Hayes 2007; Hayes et al. 2005), or nothing at all (Noelle-Neumann 1993) as they navigate what they are willing to reveal in this contentious socio-political environment.

The balance of opinions in a given socio-political interaction will influence an individual's calculus about which political information to disclose. When a person interacts with other like-minded individuals, this decision is not nearly as difficult, because there is little risk of social repercussions for sharing a political opinion with which everyone agrees. However, individuals who find themselves in a political opinion minority face a different cost-benefit analysis. Individuals in such a position might anticipate adverse social consequences for disagreeing with the group (Huckfeldt et al. 2004; Mutz 2006) that alter their calculus on which political information to disclose. In an effort to avoid discomfort and social ostracization, these individuals could modify the political opinions they express to match those of the group. This study aims to understand whether individuals behave like political chameleons, temporarily abandoning their true political opinions to *conform* to others who disagree.

Despite extant research on conformity from a psychological perspective dating back to the 1950s, there is limited evidence of *political* conformity. The limited work on political conformity generally conceptualizes conformity as updated political preferences that have actually changed to match social norms within a person's social networks (Huckfeldt et al. 2004; Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Mutz 2006; Sinclair 2012) or group norms more broadly (Levitan and Verhulst 2015; Mutz 1998; Suhay 2015). In other words, these studies consider conformity as a change in political attitudes in response to social influence. We conceptualize

conformity differently. Political conformity does not involve actual attitude change, but instead involves leading others to believe you share their political views, even if you truly do not. It is not a result of updating true political beliefs based on learning new information from peers. Political conformity is a behavioral response to the social discomfort and stress stemming from political disagreement. (Huckfeldt et al. 2004) argue that citizens are immune to pressures to conform if their political preferences are socially invisible. However, the increasing overlap between political and social preferences—and the advent of social media—make it more difficult to keep one’s political preferences completely shielded from public view.

Blending social psychological principles with political science concepts, we theorize that face-to-face political interactions are uncomfortable and this discomfort influences the way individuals engage with one another about politics. Regardless of their interest in it, people experience politics through offhand observations and interactions with people in their daily lives. These generally informal, face-to-face exchanges are hard to capture and quantify, and there is limited evidence about how people perceive and behave in response to these casual political interactions. Although most people, most of the time, are not paying much attention to politics (Converse 1964), the increasingly polarized and social nature of politics can force people into political discussions where they must strategically decide which political preferences to disclose. Motivated by a desire to avoid the social consequences of political disagreement, we argue that individuals will *temporarily* conform to a group’s political opinion. Individuals who sense that they are in a political opinion minority will allow others to believe that they all agree.

In an effort to improve our understanding of political conformity, we conduct two experiments to investigate anticipated and observed behavioral responses to contentious political interactions. Study 1 asked participants to predict how a hypothetical character would respond to a variety of political interactions among coworkers. In Study 2, participants discussed political issues with confederates who were scripted to disagree with them. The studies reveal that individuals are uncomfortable around political interactions in which they hold an opinion counter to the group. Importantly, participants both expected a hypothetical character to conform in Study 1 and actually conformed in the lab session in Study 2.¹

Theoretical Background and Motivation

We motivate our exploration by explaining why we might expect individuals to conform to others in political discussions. We first develop our argument about the inherently social nature of politics, and why changes in the perceived contentiousness of politics have heightened the salience of the social dimension of political behavior. We then connect theories and empirical evidence from social psychology to political science to describe the theoretical foundations of political conformity.

¹ Replication data and code are publicly available on *Political Behavior’s* Dataverse page <https://dataverse.harvard.edu/dataverse/polbehavior>.

A Social, Stressful, Political World

Lasswell (1936) famously wrote that “Politics is who gets what, when, and how,” an observation that acknowledges both the social and contentious aspects of politics, and the interconnections between them. Electoral politics highlights the underlying political conflict in society, making contention more salient and visible, and thus serving to reinforce to citizens the pervasiveness of disagreement in the political system. A significant portion of this contention is generated by disagreement in policy preferences between elites. However, contention in politics extends beyond policy debates, and much of the way people experience the contention of politics is through participating in social interactions, or watching others do so. We conceptualize politics as fundamentally a process of potentially contentious social interaction; people may vote in the ballot box alone, but little else is done in a social vacuum.

These anticipated or experienced socially contentious political interactions influence our perceptions of politics, as well as our behavior. For instance, Hibbing and Theiss-Morse (2002) report that respondents in a nationally representative sample who feel uneasy and uncomfortable around political arguments are more likely to support “stealth democracy,” a form of government where democratic procedures exist but are not visible and where ordinary people do not need to get involved with politics. Similarly, (Noelle-Neumann 1993) proposed the “spiral of silence” theory, which suggests that some people will silence their opinions in front of others as a way to disengage from the source of contention. Further research suggests that the people most susceptible to opting out of political interactions have personality traits that make political discussion stressful and uncomfortable (Gerber et al. 2012; Hibbing et al. 2010; Ulbig and Funk 1999). These findings highlight that some individuals are uncomfortable around political arguments and that disengagement from public exchange of opinion is preferable.

These findings aside, political scientists have not devoted significant energy trying to understand which aspects of political interactions might be most stress-inducing. Pilot data² aimed at providing us with guidance that the literature could not give reveal evidence that many potentially stressful dimensions of the political sphere cause some people anxiety. Even exposure to the existence of conflict was anxiety inducing: 81.5 % of respondents report that reading a poll showing that the opposition candidate was winning would cause them to be anxious, as would knowing that they were a partisan minority in their community (67.1 %) or among their friends (64.4 %). Beyond awareness of contention, large proportions of the sample reported that observing manifestations of this contention would cause them to be anxious, situations such as seeing a protest in the area (65.3 %), watching a televised political debate (63.7 %), or reading a post on Facebook that disagreed with their views (54 %). The possibility of *engaging* in contentious situations appears to be similarly anxiety-inducing, as 76.3 % of the sample reported anxiety

² In developing our experiments, we pilot tested a variety of political stressor stimuli. We asked individuals in a participant pool ($n = 280$) at a large, western public university to identify which of a series of political situations would cause them to be anxious. See the “Appendix” section for full details of the pilot studies.

at the thought of having a disagreeable conversation with friends or neighbors. Interestingly, approximately a third of the sample reported that even agreeable face-to-face or online political interactions would cause them to be anxious.

Based on the results that interpersonal interaction—contentious or not—had the potential to be a significant source of stress in the political sphere, in the context of a survey experiment for a related project conducted on Mechanical Turk, we also gathered open-ended responses from 440 survey respondents about the facets of politics that are stressful for individuals. Our coding scheme revealed that responses fell into one of three major categories: stressors related to the overarching process of politics (such as the behavior of candidates or officials, or the way the media covers politics); stressors related to the content of policy; or stressors related to participation. Of the 1320 messages we coded, 22 % related to participation; of those comments, 42.8 % identified factors related to individual participation (such as trying to understand politics or determining one's beliefs) while 57.2 % related to interpersonal interactions.

These pilot studies were designed to provide a general intuition about how individuals responded to politically contentious stimuli and to provide some face validity to the general notion that engaging in contentious situations can be anxiety-inducing. The data come from convenience samples of college students and Mechanical Turk workers, which means that they might not be reflective of the general population. However, the experimental results we present in this paper rely on student samples, so the student sample pilot data are quite informative for our particular sample.

Why *Political Conformity*?

Because conformity has been demonstrated in a wide variety of tasks (Asch 1956; Crutchfield 1955; Latane 1996; Nowak and Vallacher 2001) in many cross-cultural populations (Barry et al. 1959; Bond and Smith 1996; Hofstede 1980; Triandis 1990), we expect that individuals will also conform to the group's opinion on a political issue. Based on existing psychology literature, we know that human conformity is explained by three goals central to human behavior: accuracy, affiliation, and positive self-concept maintenance (Cialdini and Goldstein 2004). Because these goals are central to human behavior, we expect the same goals to also motivate *political* conformity.

Although this study does not directly test these mechanisms, it is plausible that they are still at work. For example, the human need to be accurate motivates conformity especially among those who are uncertain, have limited information, or are presented with ambiguous answer choices (Cialdini 2001). The widespread research on political attitude formation and change, particularly within the context of social networks, demonstrates how accuracy might be an important motivator of political conformity. Political scientists have demonstrated that politically uncertain individuals turn to knowledgeable members of their peer groups or elites to help inform their political opinions (Ahn et al. 2010, 2014, 2013; Druckman and Nelson 2003; Lupia and McCubbins 1998; Ryan 2010, 2011), which leads us to expect that uncertain individuals might rely on informational cues from peer groups when

stating an opinion. Additionally, prior work has shown that the opinion of a homogenous social network can signal that an attitude is valid (Festinger 1950), which increases an individual's level of confidence in holding that attitude (Levitan and Visser 2009). However, these studies in addition to the bountiful research on social networks and attitude change (Huckfeldt and Sprague 1995; Huckfeldt et al. 2004), focus on attitude formation and attitude change, which are distinct from conformity.

The human desire for group affiliation could also motivate political conformity. Social psychology research indicates that conformity and other forms of behavioral mimicry can build rapport and help develop social relationships (Chartrand and Bargh 1999) and may be employed to gain social approval from others (Cialdini and Goldstein 2004). Because individuals want to feel a sense of belonging and affiliation, it is likely that they would want to present themselves as similar to others with whom they interact—self-expression of political views should be no exception. Although individualist cultures like the United States tend to promote uniqueness instead of conformity (Cialdini et al. 1999; Kim and Markus 1999), the stress and discomfort surrounding political disagreement might be more potent than the desire to be unique. The desire for affiliation might promote political conformity even more in the polarized American political environment that emphasizes an “us versus them” mentality, especially if we consider partisanship as a form of social identity (Green et al. 2002).

Individuals also conform to group beliefs to protect their self-esteem and self-concept. Individuals can enhance—or at least maintain—their self-esteem by conforming to groups they value (Brewer and Roccas 2001; Cialdini and Goldstein 2004; Pool et al. 1998). Individuals might value certain social groups such as family, coworkers, or particular friend groups, regardless of their political affiliations. But, if any of these valued groups consistently hold different political opinions than an individual, he or she might feel pressured to conform to their opinions to maintain his or her identity with that group. While some individuals maintain their self-esteem by promoting a sense of uniqueness (Blanton and Christie 2003; Kim and Markus 1999), which could lead them to *avoid* conformity, others will experience greater self-esteem from identifying with a group, leading them to conform politically.

Although the social psychological principles explaining social conformity should also explain conformity in a political context, there is a unique tension in the political context that distinguishes it from other contexts explored in social psychology. Individuals living in democratic political systems are not only allowed to participate, they are expected to. Individuals, particularly in America, are often influenced by appeals to their “civic duty,” (Campbell et al. 1954; Downs 1957; Gerber and Green 2000; Gerber et al. 2008) and part of performing one's civic duty involves engaging in political discussion and deliberation (Bennett et al. 2000; Dalton 2008; Dryzek 1994; Lasswell 1941).

The strong sense of civic duty coupled with individualist American culture that emphasizes uniqueness might pressure individuals to express their true political opinions, regardless of the social consequences for doing so. Motivated by their desire to perform their civic duty, Americans might feel pressured to contribute to

political discussions. This can be troubling for individuals who disagree with others participating in the discussion because while they might feel pressure to participate, doing so could reveal disagreement resulting in undesirable social consequences. Individuals in political minorities are therefore placed in a challenging position where they must artfully balance the expectation to participate in political discussions with the desire to maintain their social relationships. Temporarily conforming to the group's opinion could be a viable compromise to achieve both simultaneously.

Theoretical Expectations

Put simply, we expect that individuals in a political minority will conform to the majority political opinion. When discussing politics with a group of others who disagree, individuals will succumb to pressures to conform, motivated by their desire to alleviate the discomfort associated with political disagreement and contention. We expect individuals in a political minority to conform with greater frequency than individuals in more balanced or homogeneous discussion networks. The pressure to conform is greatly reduced when minority dissenters are not alone (Asch 1956). When individuals view themselves as the *only* ones holding a particular viewpoint in a conversation, they will be motivated to temporarily conform to the group's opinion.³ We articulate specific hypotheses for each stage of our study, but we broadly expect that individuals in a political opinion minority will be more likely to conform.

Method & Sample

We test these expectations in two experiments. We first use a vignette experiment to investigate whether individuals will expect hypothetical characters to conform in two different, potentially contentious political interactions (Study 1). We then test whether individuals actually conform through an Asch-based lab experiment where we directly observe and measure conforming behavior (Study 2).

The data for this study were collected as part of the political science student subject pool at a small public university on the east coast. In the fall iteration of the survey, students took a pretest including basic demographic questions, political interest, political knowledge, and political issue positions. Approximately three days later, they came into the lab and either participated in Study 1 ($n = 201$) or Study 2 ($n = 70$), but not both. In the spring, Study 1 was repeated, but conducted at the same time as the pretest questions and the entire study was taken online. A total of 432 students participated in Study 1 and t tests reveal that there were no differences in answers on the dependent variables between the set of participants that took the

³ We furthermore do not expect everyone in a political minority to conform. We expect that there are individual differences such as partisan attachment, political interest, conflict avoidance, and social anxiety that contribute to an individual's susceptibility to political conformity. We explore these individual differences in future work.

study in the lab in the fall and the set that took it online in the spring.⁴ Summary statistics about the sample are shown in Table 5 in the “Appendix” section.

Study 1

Design

We chose to first employ a vignette experiment because it is difficult to observe organic political discussions in the real world and vignette experiments are especially useful when real-world observations of the behaviors of interest are not practical, feasible, or ethical (Caro et al. 2012). The experiment was delivered using Qualtrics software and was embedded into a larger survey that covered the variety of topics described above. On the first screen of the study, participants read the vignette. The wording of the vignette, and the fact that the character identified with the subject’s political party, were intended to help the participant put him or herself into the position of the fictional character. In addition, we developed the context of the vignette based on the pilot data described previously in which individuals described what about politics they found stressful. Vignette experiments are most effective when the variables in the vignette fit the participants (Weber 1992). Levy and Dubinsky (1983) and Schoemaker (1993) suggest that vignettes can be constructed to better match the participants if they are based on descriptions of the situations researchers aim to emulate in their vignettes. As such, we based our vignettes on pilot data in which individuals described contentious political interactions. Furthermore, we chose to focus on a workplace environment because political disagreement is more common among weak ties, such as coworkers (Huckfeldt et al. 2004; Mutz 2006; Mutz and Mondak 1998). We employed a 2×2 design and participants were randomly assigned to one of the four resulting vignettes.

Consider the following hypothetical situation. While you are reading this story, please try to imagine yourself in Sally’s position. As you read through the description of this situation, please imagine as concretely and vividly as possible what Sally is thinking and feeling, and how her thoughts and feelings will shape her behavior:

Sally is a registered [same partisanship as subject] and has always voted for [same partisanship as subject] candidates. Based on conversations from previous elections, Sally knows that her coworkers [CONTEXTUAL MANIPULATION]. Last Thursday morning at the office when she went to the common room to pour herself some coffee, several of her coworkers were standing around talking about the upcoming election. Sally started to listen, and realized that the group was talking about [PROVOCATION

⁴ The differences in covariates shown in Table 5 related to political engagement are likely due to the fact that there was a gubernatorial election during the fall semester while the study was being fielded.

MANIPULATION]. All of a sudden, one coworker turns to Sally and says, “Sally, of course you’re voting for [opposition party candidate], aren’t you?”

The vignette script implies that the character has a clear preference for a candidate that contradicts the preference of the coworker who poses the question to her. The two manipulations were designed to alter other features of the interaction. In the first manipulation, the contextual manipulation, we describe the context of the conversation using two different configurations of opinion in the group. In the **Partisan Minority** condition, the character was described as being in an opinion minority (the text “Sally knows that her coworkers are almost all registered [opposite party of Sally]” was inserted into the vignette). In the **Balanced Party** condition, text stating that “Sally knows that her coworkers are fairly evenly divided with equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans” was inserted instead. The provocation manipulation featured the **Support Opponent** condition (in which Sally’s colleagues discussed their support for the opposition party candidate’s policy positions) and the **Oppose Favored Candidate** condition (in which the colleagues discuss how much they oppose the policy positions of the candidate Sally supports.)

After the vignette, the subject answered a series of questions of the format “What is the likelihood that...” For each of these post-treatment dependent variables, respondents answered on a 1–5 scale, with 1 labeled as “very unlikely” and 5 labeled as “very likely.” We operationalize our construct of interest, political conformity, using the question “What is the likelihood that Sally expresses her true opinion to the group?” This dependent variable was worded to make clear that the character’s true opinion was not influenced by the group’s opinion, and thus assesses solely the extent to which a subject expects the character to publicly conform.

We are also interested in three additional dependent variables that may help to elucidate why subjects anticipate that the hypothetical character might conform. The first assesses the anticipated immediate response to the situation. Our theory suggests that one of the motivating factors for conformity is the discomfort of engaging in political disagreement, and thus we measured the participant’s estimate of the level of discomfort experienced by the character with the question “What is the likelihood that Sally feels uncomfortable answering this question?”

Additionally, we also sought to assess whether participants thought that this potentially uncomfortable situation might have subsequent consequences for the character and thus the final two dependent variables examined the potential social ramifications of the situation. There is increasing evidence that partisanship has become a salient social identity, and we wanted to investigate whether a description of an uncomfortable political encounter might change participants’ responses about the character’s social behavior. Although not a direct test of affiliation motives driving the potential for conformity, demonstrating a difference in anticipated future social behavior would suggest that respondents are making the link between the exchange of political viewpoints and the nature of the characters’ social relationships. We measure this using two questions: “What is the likelihood that

Sally invites her coworkers over for dinner in the next six months?” and “What is the likelihood that Sally wants to look for a new job within the next year?”

Study 1 Hypotheses

Our theory about what drives political conformity is based primarily on the configuration of opinions within the group, and thus we expect the largest effects between the two conditions in the contextual manipulation. Based on the findings of Asch (1956), we expect to observe more conformity in the Partisan Minority condition over the Balanced Partisan condition. To our knowledge, but there have been no previous studies linking the way in which disagreement is provoked to a person’s response. The provocation manipulation was designed to induce a change in the social cost of replying by altering the implicitly demanded response from the hypothetical character. In the Support Opponent condition, Sally could voice her support for her preferred candidate without directly contradicting what her colleagues have said; conversely, in the Oppose Favored Candidate condition, expressing support for her preferred candidate would force Sally to disagree directly with the collective opinion that has been expressed. Thus, we anticipate that the Oppose Favored Candidate condition may also cause higher reported anticipated conformity, although we consider this hypothesis to be exploratory in the absence of previous literature on which to base this expectation.

Second, we also expect the Partisan Minority condition to create higher levels of discomfort and a greater threat of downstream social consequences: participants in the Partisan Minority condition will report more anticipated discomfort, expect Sally to be *less* likely to invite her coworkers over for dinner, and expect her to be *more* likely to look for a new job than participants in the Balanced Party condition. We expect that the Oppose Favored Candidate condition may induce higher levels of reported discomfort, but we do not expect the difference between the provocation manipulations to be strong enough to affect the downstream social consequence variables.

Finally, we expect that subjects who report higher levels of discomfort will be less likely to report that the character will report her true feelings. It is possible that the effect of the treatments on reported likelihood of conformity is *mediated* by a subject’s report of anticipated discomfort, but only if the treatment affects the reported discomfort level and discomfort level affects reported conformity.

Results

Summary Statistics

We begin with descriptive statistics. While many participants marked the midpoint of the conformity scale, there was significant variation across the question “What is the likelihood that Sally expresses her true opinion to the group?” On average across all conditions, 33.5 % (95 % CI 29.0–38.3) of participants reported a value of 1 or 2, indicating that they thought it was unlikely or very unlikely that the character would state her true opinions when asked about her political beliefs, as shown in Fig. 7b in the “[Appendix](#)” section.

Turning to the potential mediating variable, we examine how comfortable participants expected the character to be in the situation. The vast majority of the sample reports that these hypothetical scenarios will make the character uncomfortable, as shown in Fig. 7a in the “Appendix” section.

Finally, the two social consequence variables are highly skewed in the opposite direction. Our participants did not project that Sally and her colleagues would socialize at dinner outside of the office (over 90 % marked a score of 3 or lower), but neither did they think she would look for a new job (over 95 % marked a score of 3 or lower).

Treatment Effects

We first examine whether the treatment conditions affected participants’ projection of conformity. There is some suggestive evidence that participants in the Partisan Minority (PM) condition were less likely to report that Sally would report her true opinion than participants in the Balanced Party (BP) condition (PM = 2.86, BP = 3.03, $p < .10$). This effect seems to be driven by an increase in the proportion of respondents who report on the low end of the scale: an increased proportion of participants in the PM condition reported that Sally would be very unlikely to report her true feelings (PM = 11.0 %, BP = 5.4 %, $p < .10$), as shown in Fig. 1. We find no evidence of a treatment effect within the provocation manipulation, nor any support for an interaction between the two treatments.

The Partisan Minority condition evoked a correctly signed but statistically insignificant difference in the anticipated level of discomfort as compared to the Balanced Party condition, as did the Oppose Favored Candidate condition over the Support Opponent condition. We do not find any evidence in support of an interaction effect of the treatments. Mediation analysis requires a significant association between the independent variable and the theorized mediator (Baron and Kenny 1986). In the absence of a significant relationship between the treatment and the theorized mediator, we do not conduct a formal test for mediation.

There is evidence that the contextual manipulation affected respondents’ perceptions of one of social ramifications of the interaction: subjects in the Partisan Minority condition think Sally is more likely to look for a new job (PM—2.24, BP—1.91, $p < .0001$). While subjects think this is an unlikely occurrence, an increased proportion of people in the PM condition report a score of 3 or higher on the 5 point scale (Partisan Minority—37.6 %, Balanced Partisan—25.2 %, $p < .01$). There are no significant differences between the two conditions of the provocation manipulation for either of the social consequence variables, nor any interaction effects between the treatments.

Further Exploring the Conformity Decision

The suggestive but weak relationships between the treatment conditions hypothesized to be generate more discomfort (Partisan Minority and Oppose Favored Candidate) and the reported discomfort level suggest that a subject’s report of anticipated discomfort is less a consequence of the treatment condition he or she received and more a factor of individual characteristics that predispose an individual

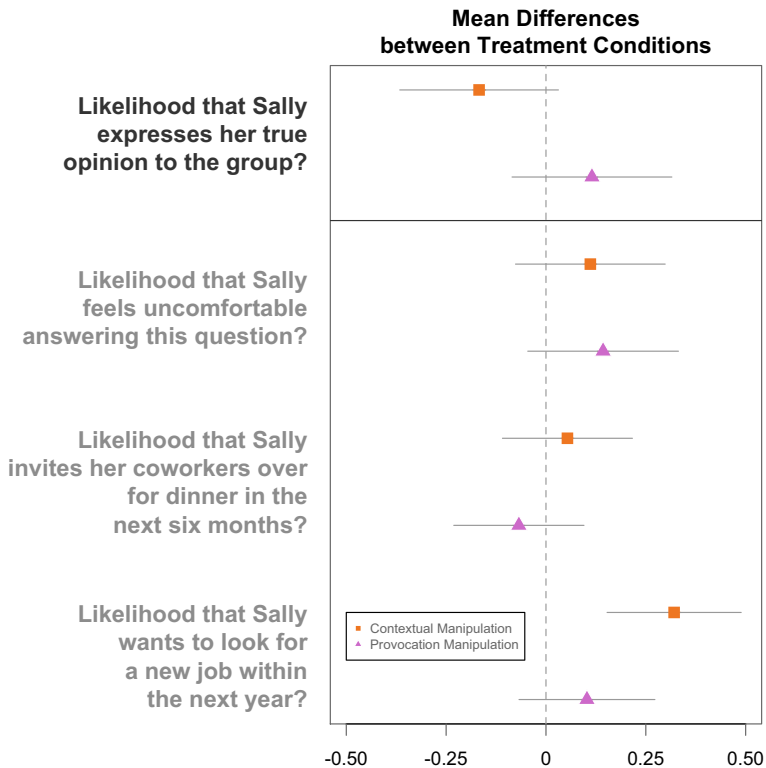


Fig. 1 Difference in means between treatment conditions on two dependent variables. Participants in the Partisan Minority condition were slightly more likely to think that Sally would conform

to be more sensitive to the consequences of disagreement, across contexts and provocations. In the absence of a significant relationship between the treatment conditions and reported discomfort level, moving outside the experimental framework and focusing on the relationship between the discomfort and conformity, we find strong evidence that a subject's report of being uncomfortable is significantly related to the anticipation of conformity. We are limited in our ability to assess which individual differences may explain reported conformity, but we are able to demonstrate that the relationship between discomfort and conformity persists when controlling for demographic and politically relevant variables: the higher someone perceives the character's level of discomfort, the more likely they were to report that she would not share her true political opinions, as shown in Table 1. Finally, subjects who anticipated that the character would conform were also more likely to report that the character would look for a new job and much less likely to report that she would invite her coworkers over to dinner (see Table 6 in the "Appendix" section). As we elaborate on in the conclusion, while being in a partisan minority does appear to induce conformity, and feelings of discomfort are strongly associated with conformity, the nature of the relationships between these variables is more complex than a straightforward mediation.

Table 1 Explaining prediction of “expressing true opinion”

	Dependent variable: likelihood of expressing true opinion		
	Base model (1)	Demographic covariates (2)	Political covariates (3)
Uncomfortable	−0.687*** (0.102)	−0.696*** (0.103)	−0.722*** (0.107)
Male		−0.131 (0.181)	−0.173 (0.189)
White		0.080 (0.198)	0.042 (0.203)
2012 engagement			0.021 (0.064)
Political knowledge			−0.095 (0.125)
Party strength			0.109 (0.107)
Ideology			−0.076 (0.058)
Political interest			0.168 (0.159)
Intercept 112	−5.32 (0.477)	−5.40 (0.515)	−5.51 (0.799)
Intercept 213	−3.53 (0.438)	−3.59 (0.479)	−3.68 (0.776)
Intercept 314	−1.92 (0.413)	−1.98 (0.454)	−2.05 (0.761)
Intercept 415	0.20 (0.424)	0.15 (0.461)	0.25 (0.768)
Observations	415	412	393
AIC	1153.95	1148.24	1090.07
Residual deviance	1143.95	1134.24	1066.07

Tables formatted with *stargazer* Hlavac (2015)

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Study 2

Design

Study 2 included three parts: a pretest, a lab session, and a posttest. Participants ($n = 70$) took the pretest online three days prior to the lab session. The pretest was embedded in the political science mass testing survey, so the multitude of questions and the time separating the pretest and lab session should have reduced participants’

ability to be deliberately internally consistent between surveys. Three days after the lab session, participants took a brief posttest survey online.

Pretest

The pretest included fourteen questions adapted from the American National Election Studies about political issues, embedded within a large survey. Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with a variety of policies listed in Table 2.

Lab Session

Upon informing consent in the lab, participants entered a small conference room to discuss political issues in a “focus group” with two other “participants,” who were actually confederates acting as part of the study. Participants were told that they were participating in a focus group about students’ political opinions on campus. Participants and confederates took turns sharing their opinions on the fourteen political issues listed in Table 2. Participants were randomly assigned to state their responses out loud on each issue *before* or *after* the confederates, with each issue presented one at a time. Those randomly assigned to give their responses *before* the confederates were in the *control condition*, because they would be giving their responses to each political question without knowing the opinions of the confederates on the issue at hand, therefore giving the participants limited information about how to conform on the particular issue. Those randomly assigned to give their responses *last* were in the *treatment condition* because they would only give their response after hearing that the confederates disagreed with them on an issue, giving them a position with which to conform. Participants shared their opinion in the randomly assigned order for one issue at a time. Aside from the order in which participants were randomly assigned to give their responses, the procedures were the same across the treatment groups. In other words, both treatments involved exposing participants to differing viewpoints from their own, but varied the order in which that information was disclosed. The treatment, therefore, was deliberately very subtle and designed to test whether people would conform to a group’s opinion when given the opportunity to do so.

All participants interacted with confederates who disagreed with them on most issues. Based on their pretest responses, the confederates were told to play the “role” of either Republicans or Democrats and to follow the corresponding scripts, as shown in Table 7 in the “Appendix” section. If a participant identified as a Democrat, the confederates were scripted to be Republicans; if a participant identified as a Republican, the confederates were scripted to be Democrats; if a participant identified as an Independent, the confederates were randomly assigned to be either Republicans or Democrats in each session. The confederates were blind to the purpose of which script they were told to use and the party identification of the participants. Each session included two confederates, balanced by race and gender, such that each lab session included one male confederate and one female

Table 2 Study 2 questions

Topic	Question	Points on scale
Voting (Faux)	On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “very important” and 1 being “not important at all,” how important do you think it is to vote in elections?	10
Egypt (Faux)	Some people think that the US should continue giving military aid to Egypt at the same level as before the military takeover. Others feel that we should suspend all military aid to Egypt. Others have opinions in between. On a scale of 1 to 9, where 1 is that the US should continue giving military aid to Egypt, and 9 is that we should suspend all military aid to Egypt, where would you place yourself?	9
Economics	Over the past year, would you say that the economic policies of the federal government have made the nation’s economy better, worse, or haven’t they made much difference either way?	3
Energy	Some people think that the most important priority for addressing America’s energy supply should be expanding exploration and production of oil, coal, and natural gas. Do you agree or disagree?	2
Minimum wage	Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose an increase in the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$9.00 an hour?	4
Abortion (Faux)	Some people believe that abortion should be permitted only if the life and health of the woman is in danger. Do you agree or disagree? Do you do so strongly?	4
Taxes	On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “very likely” and 1 being “very unlikely,” how likely would you be to vote for a candidate who supports raising taxes on the wealthy and lowering taxes on the poor?	10
Gun control (Faux)	Do you favor or oppose making private gun sales and sales at gun shows subject to background checks?	2
Emissions	Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose setting stricter emission limits on power plants in order to address climate change?	4
Isolationism	Some people believe that this country would be better off if we just stayed home and did not concern ourselves with problems in other parts of the world. Do you agree or disagree?	2
Affordable care act	On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “very likely” and 1 being “very unlikely,” how likely would you be to vote for a candidate who supports the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare?	10
Government power	Some people are afraid the government in Washington is getting too powerful for the good of the country and the individual person. Others feel that the government in Washington is not getting too strong. What is your feeling, do you think the government is getting too powerful or do you think the government is not getting too strong?	2
Marriage equality	On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “very likely” and 1 being “very unlikely,” how likely would you be to vote for a candidate who supports deference to the states on gay marriage?	10
Medicaid funding	On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “ver likely” and 1 being “very unlikely,” how likely would you be to vote for a candidate who supports cutting spending on programs like Medicaid and Medicare?	10

Questions are displayed in one of the orders in which the questions were asked in the lab session. The faux questions were deliberately placed, but all others were initially randomized. Participants were then randomly assigned to either the question ordering shown above, or a different question ordering created with the same procedure: Voting (faux), Egypt (faux), Affordable Care Act, Energy, Economics, Abortion (faux), Isolationism, Gun Control (faux), Medicaid Funding, Taxes, Emissions, Marriage Equality, Minimum Wage, Government Power

confederate, one of whom was white and one of whom was of a racial minority group.

Each of the fourteen issues was presented one at a time on a screen that changed to the next issue automatically after one minute. Participants and confederates were instructed to state their opinion on the question on the screen and discuss it if they wanted. Because the questions presented on the screen were the same as the pretest, participants were sometimes asked to report a number to indicate where their opinion fell on a scale. To maintain as much control as possible, confederates were trained to avoid discussion and not to provide new information if asked by participants. One confederate was “randomly selected” to be the recorder for the session and was given a response form with the discussion questions and a spot to record each response from the participant and confederates. The response form, available in the online see the “[Appendix](#)” section, included the same question wording and response options as the pretest, with a space to circle the response given by the participant and each confederate. In the rare event that participants gave a response that did not match the options on the response form, the recorder asked the participant to clarify his or her response in terms of the question response options. Discussions with the confederates after the study indicate that this was not a concern because participants gave their responses within the framework of the question format.

In order to make the situation more realistic and consistent with previous conformity research, the first two questions were structured slightly differently, with less social pressure for conformity. The confederates gave neutral answers to the first two “faux” questions, giving the participants no signals to their political leanings. Beginning on the third question, the confederates followed a script designed to disagree with the participants based on pretest results. Overall, the lab session included ten “critical” questions on which the confederates disagreed with the participant according to the script, and four “faux” questions designed to make the study more realistic, with confederates disagreeing with each other, agreeing with the participant, or providing a neutral response, as shown in [Table 2](#) in the text and [Table 7](#) in the “[Appendix](#)” section. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two question orderings. We held the faux questions in the same positions and then randomized the order of the ten critical questions. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two initially randomized question orders, as explained in [Table 2](#) in the “[Appendix](#)” section. After completing all fourteen questions, participants were thanked for their time and instructed to await a follow up survey in the coming days.

Posttest

Three days after the lab session, participants were emailed a posttest survey. The survey included the same fourteen questions that they answered in the large pretest survey and in the lab session. These questions were again buried within a larger survey, though not as large as the pretest. The primary purpose of the posttest was to examine the distinction between persuasion or attitude change and conformity. If participants gave the same responses on the pretest and posttest, but gave a different

response in the lab session, then we have strong evidence that individuals were indeed conforming in the lab. However, if individuals gave the same response in the lab session and on the posttest, but this response differed from the pretest, then this could be evidence of attitude change.

Study 2 Hypotheses

We hypothesized that participants in the treatment condition would conform at a higher frequency and to a greater degree than participants in the control condition. Based on extant findings on conformity in social psychology, we expected participants to conform to a group's political opinion when they had heard the confederates state opinions with which they disagreed. In the control condition, participants would not know the political opinions of the confederates before stating their opinions, so they would have limited information with which to conform. It is possible that participants could intuit that the confederates generally disagreed with the participant over the course of the study, which means that we might observe some preemptive "conformity" in the control condition. However, we expect to see a greater frequency of conformity in the treatment condition, when participants are certain of the group's opinions prior to stating their own opinion, compared to the control condition where they can only surmise the group's opinions over time in the study. Because Study 2 is designed to be a distinct, behavioral test of whether individuals actually conform in a group setting, as opposed to reporting their expectations of a hypothetical character's behavior, the primary hypothesis is about the difference between the treatment and control groups in the number of times participants conformed.

Results

A total of 70 students participated in this study, but seven were removed from the analysis because of treatment administration errors such as missing confederates, confederates using the wrong script, and participants knowing the confederates personally. The remaining 63 participants were included in most analyses.⁵ As shown in Table 8 in the "Appendix" section, the treatment groups were balanced on most key characteristics. Participants in the control group were marginally more conservative than participants in the treatment group ($p < .10$), and there were marginally more Republicans than Democrats ($p < .10$) in the control group. Participants in the treatment group also reported paying marginally more attention to politics than those in the control group ($p < .10$). There were thirteen participants

⁵ As detailed later, we measure conformity in two ways: potential and pure conformity. Pure conformity requires data from the posttest; 17 participants did not complete the posttest, so they are not included in the pure conformity analyses. Results for potential conformity hold with and without these 17 participants, but for statistical power purposes, we include them in the analyses for potential conformity. As shown in Table 10 in the "Appendix" section, participants who did not complete the posttest did not meaningfully differ from those who did complete the posttest, at least based on the observable data we have available.

whose posttest guesses of the true purpose of the study were fairly accurate. All results hold including and excluding those participants.

Summary Statistics

Our primary dependent variable in this analysis is the number of times participants conformed across the ten critical issues during the session. We measure conformity in two ways. First, *potential conformity* means that in the lab, a participant gave an answer that differed from his or her pretest response, moved in the direction of the confederates, and crossed the midpoint on the scale, such that the lab response actually countered the pretest response. For example, if on the pretest a participant indicated that he or she strongly agreed with something, but in the lab only said that he or she agreed, that would *not* be coded as potential conformity. If that participant said that he or she disagreed or strongly disagreed in the lab, that would be considered potential conformity. We call this potential conformity because the observed attitude shift in the lab has the potential to be conformity, but it could also be genuine attitude change. Second, *pure conformity* includes the requirements of potential conformity, in addition to requiring participants to give the same response on the pretest and the posttest. Pure conformity thus firmly demonstrates altering one's opinion *only* in the presence of others who disagree, whereas potential conformity allows for some flexibility on the private pretest and posttest measures.

Note that both of our measures of conformity require movement across a midpoint in the scale, a much stricter requirement than previous studies exploring the public expression of opinions (Levitan and Verhulst 2015). We do this in order to differentiate the concept of conformity from other factors that could induce movement on a response scale for an issue position between a pretest and a lab session. On questions utilizing a response scale with more than five points, some movement is likely to be expected simply because of the lack of distinction in a subject's mind on the scale points, for example a "5" and a "6" on a seven-point scale. We cannot say with certainty that this movement would represent conformity and is not simply a form of response instability. By limiting the measurement of our construct to opinions that actually "flip sides," we can be more confident that subjects are publicly expressing an opinion that is meaningfully different from the opinion they expressed privately on the pretest.

Figure 2 shows the distribution of the frequency of conformity in both potential (Fig. 2a) and pure (Fig. 2b) measures of conformity for all participants and each treatment condition. The thicker lines on the bottom of the figures show the raw distribution of participants, showing that most participants conformed once or twice and no one conformed more than four times. More importantly, the thin lines on Fig. 2 show the cumulative distribution. These lines illustrate that although participants did not conform often, 88.9 % of participants conformed on at least one question by potential conformity measures (94.1 % in the treatment group and 82.8 % in the control group), and 58.7 % of participants conformed at least once by pure conformity measures (65.2 % in the treatment group and 52.2 % in the control group). These distributions are strikingly similar to those found in the Asch (1956) experiments.

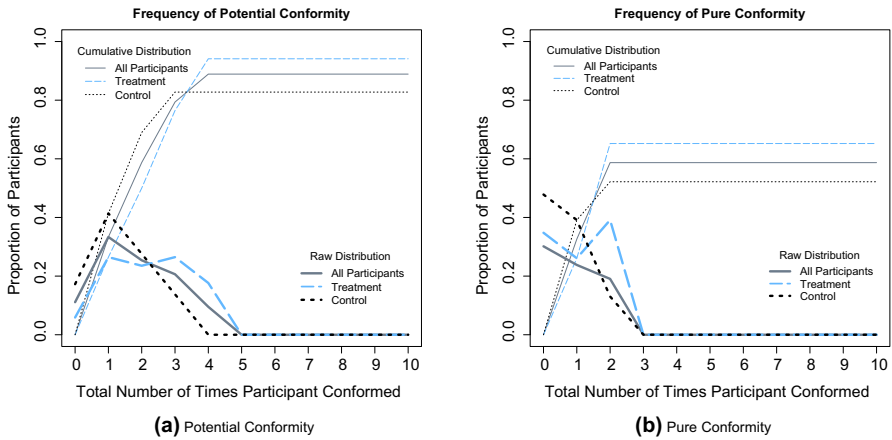


Fig. 2 The *thick lines* sloping downward in these figures reflect the distribution of the frequency of conformity for all participants and each treatment group. The *thin lines* sloping upward reflect the *cumulative* distribution of the frequency of conformity for all participants and each treatment group. **a** shows the distributions using the measure of potential conformity and **b** shows the distributions using the measure of pure conformity

As a manipulation check, we used a *t* test to investigate differences in the average frequency of opinion change between the pretest and lab session between the ten critical questions and the four faux questions. There was significantly more average change in reported opinion in the critical questions than the faux questions ($p < .001$). This means that there was significantly more change in reported opinion on questions in which both confederates intentionally disagreed with the participant. There were no significant differences between the two randomized question orders, nor were there significant differences based on the confederates with whom the participants interacted.

Treatment Main Effects

We hypothesized that participants who stated their responses last (treatment) would conform at higher levels than participants who stated their responses first (control). We test this hypothesis using standard *t* tests and randomization inference. Randomization inference is gaining traction in political science, especially in experimental work (Blattman 2015; Crabtree et al. 2015; Gerber and Green 2012; Young 2016). First, using a *t* test to examine the effect of the treatment on conformity, we found that participants in the treatment condition conformed significantly more frequently than participants in the control condition for potential conformity ($p < .01$), as shown in Fig. 3. Participants in the treatment condition conformed more frequently than in the control condition by pure conformity standards as well, but this difference is not statistically significant by standard thresholds ($p = .105$).⁶ It is possible that we are statistically underpowered to detect

⁶ Previous versions of this manuscript reported the pure conformity results as being significant at the .05 level, but upon preparing the replication data and code in accordance with *Political Behavior's* data

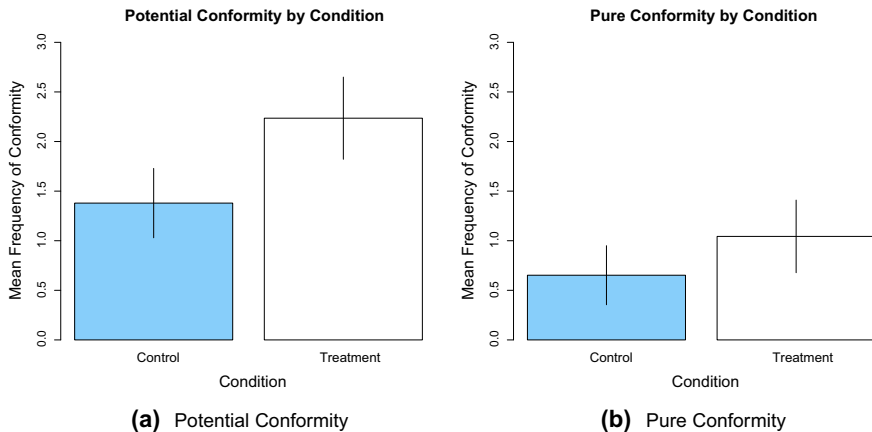


Fig. 3 Difference in the number of times participants conformed by the potential (a) and pure (b) conformity parameters in each treatment group. *Lines* represent 95 % confidence intervals

a significant difference between the treatment groups by pure conformity standards. Because pure conformity is measured based on posttest results, only those participants who completed the posttest can be included in the analysis, which reduces our sample to 46 participants for the pure conformity tests. As Fig. 3 illustrates, participants conformed in both conditions, but the frequency of conformity was significantly higher in the treatment group for potential conformity. Although it is possible that participants in the control condition were able to guess the group's opinion over the course of the study, we find that participants were no more likely to conform at the beginning of the study than at the end, making this less likely.

Second, we use randomization inference tests to examine the treatment effect on potential and pure conformity. In effect, we ran 10,000 simulations of our experiment, using the observed values of the conformity measures, but randomly reassigning the treatment condition, and calculating the difference of means between the shuffled treatment groups. We then compared these results to the observed mean differences, using the true treatment group assignments. The figures thus compare our results to the distribution of 10,000 simulated difference of means tests. As shown in Fig. 4, the observed difference of means between the true treatment and control groups is distinct from the vast majority of the randomly generated differences of means from randomly generated treatment groups. Specifically, only 0.10 % of the permuted differences were greater than the observed difference for potential conformity, as were 3.02 % of the permuted differences for the pure conformity measure. Both of these results provide evidence that individuals in the treatment group conformed, by potential and pure standards, more frequently than those in the control group.

Footnote 6 continued

availability and replication policy, we discovered a coding error. The findings presented in the paper reflect the results based on the corrected code.

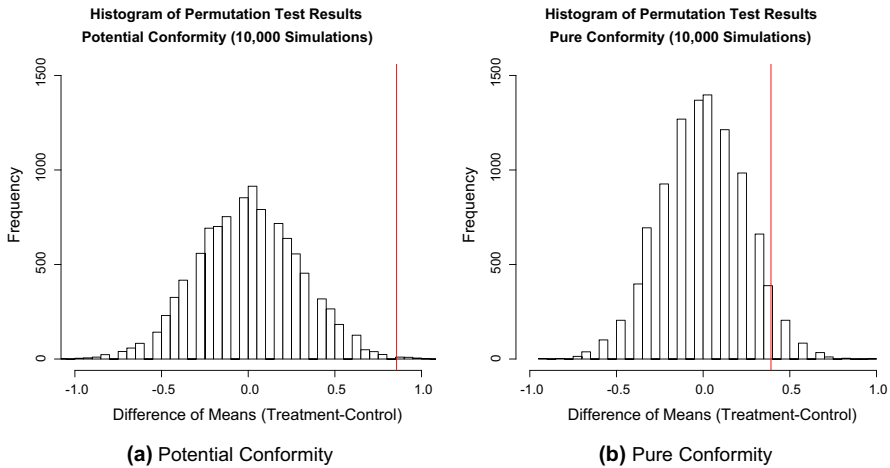


Fig. 4 Distribution of 10,000 permuted differences of means. The vertical red line indicates the observed difference between the treatment and control groups for potential (a) and pure (b) conformity, using the true condition labels. Results indicate that 0.10 % of the permuted differences of means for potential conformity are greater than the observed difference, as are 3.02 % of the permuted differences of means for the measure of pure conformity (Color figure online)

While these results are compelling given that participants were randomly assigned to the treatment conditions, we push the results further by testing the effects of the treatment on conformity in a regression framework. As shown in Tables 3 and 4, controlling for a host of characteristics that might influence conformity, the question ordering the participant received, and whether the participant surmised the true purpose of the study, the treatment *still* significantly affected the frequency with which participants conformed by potential conformity measures. The treatment effects are not statistically significant for pure conformity, but this could be a consequence of our small sample size and limited statistical power. The treatment does not appear to be conditional on any of the demographics we have included in our models, however our small sample size limits our ability to fully explore this. The pattern of results shown in this ordinary least squares framework is consistent with poisson models available in the “Appendix” section. A description of the control variable measures is also available in the “Appendix” section.

Explaining the Conformity Decision

Based on the results from Study 1 indicating that participants thought that a hypothetical character would be uncomfortable in the politically contentious discussion, we included some self-report measures on the post-test of Study 2 to assess the emotional experience individuals have while actually engaging in politically contentious discussions. We asked participants to reflect on the emotions they experienced during the lab session. As shown in Fig. 5, very few participants

Table 3 Study 2 regression models: potential conformity

	Dependent variable			
	Potential conformity			
	Base model	Study controls	Demographic controls	Political controls
Condition	0.856*** (0.276)	0.822*** (0.268)	0.873*** (0.269)	0.680*** (0.310)
Knew purpose		-0.650* (0.331)	-0.677** (0.336)	-0.818** (0.368)
Order A		0.385 (0.268)	0.475* (0.272)	0.411 (0.303)
Female			0.218 (0.274)	0.145 (0.309)
White			-0.210 (0.311)	-.145 (0.350)
2012 engagement				0.061 (0.098)
Political knowledge				-0.077 (0.173)
Political interest				-0.051 (0.278)
Partisan attachment				0.026 (0.024)
Ideology				0.021 (0.098)
Constant	1.379*** (0.203)	1.324*** (0.262)	1.312*** (0.380)	1.203 (1.055)
Observations	63	63	62	61
R ²	0.136	0.221	0.259	0.295
Adjusted R ²	0.122	0.181	0.193	0.154
Residual SE	1.094 (df = 61)	1.056 (df = 59)	1.052 (df = 56)	1.082 (df = 50)
F statistic	9.590*** (df = 1; 61)	5.574*** (df = 3; 59)	3.917*** (df = 5; 56)	2.090*** (df = 10; 50)

Tables formatted with *stargazer* Hlavac (2015)

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

reported feeling happy or excited and the most dominant emotions were surprise, frustration, anxiety, and confusion. Very few people reported feeling scared or angry, but the point still remains that negative emotions were much more prevalent than positive emotions while interacting with people who disagree. This trend is consistent across both treatment groups, which suggests that engaging with people

Table 4 Study 2 Regression models: pure conformity

	Dependent variable			
	Pure conformity			
	Base model	Study controls	Demographic controls	Political controls
Condition	0.391 (0.236)	0.371 (0.239)	0.379 (0.239)	-0.069 (0.235)
Knew purpose		-0.330 (0.273)	-0.389 (0.274)	-0.396 (0.251)
Order A		-0.099 (0.240)	-0.143 (0.243)	-0.270 (0.218)
Female			0.267 (0.243)	0.027 (0.229)
White			0.335 (0.283)	0.556** (0.267)
2012 engagement				0.032 (0.069)
Political knowledge				-0.132 (0.129)
Political interest				-0.140 (0.192)
Partisan attachment				0.037** (0.016)
Ideology				-0.226*** (0.068)
Constant	0.652*** (0.167)	0.800*** (0.225)	0.417 (0.328)	1.514** (0.720)
Observations	46	46	46	45
R ²	0.059	0.092	0.146	0.472
Adjusted R ²	0.037	0.027	0.039	0.316
Residual SE	0.800 (df = 44)	0.804 (df = 42)	0.799 (df = 40)	0.674 (df = 34)
F statistic	2.750 (df = 1; 44)	1.418 (df = 3; 42)	1.368 (df = 5; 40)	3.036*** (df = 10; 34)

Tables formatted with *stargazer* Hlavac (2015)

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

with whom one disagrees politically is a generally more negative experience, regardless of pressures to conform. Of course, these emotions could be connected to the experience of simply participating in a study or discussing politics generally, although we note that our subjects were predominantly political science majors who are generally very interested in politics.

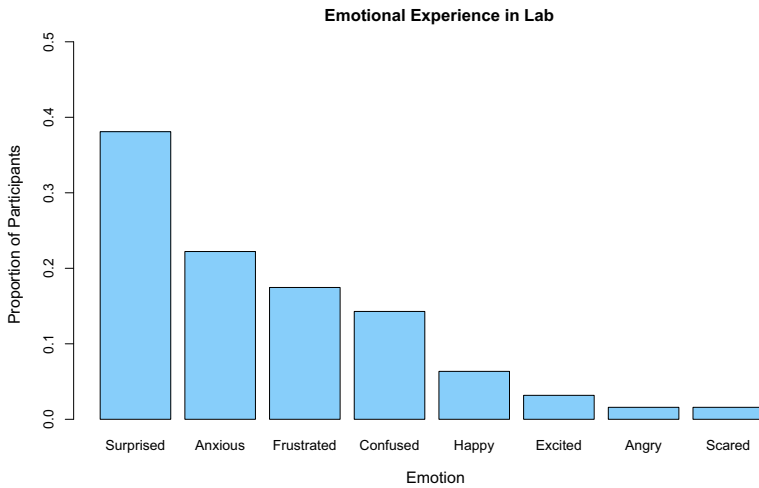


Fig. 5 Proportion of participants reporting experiencing each emotion during the lab session

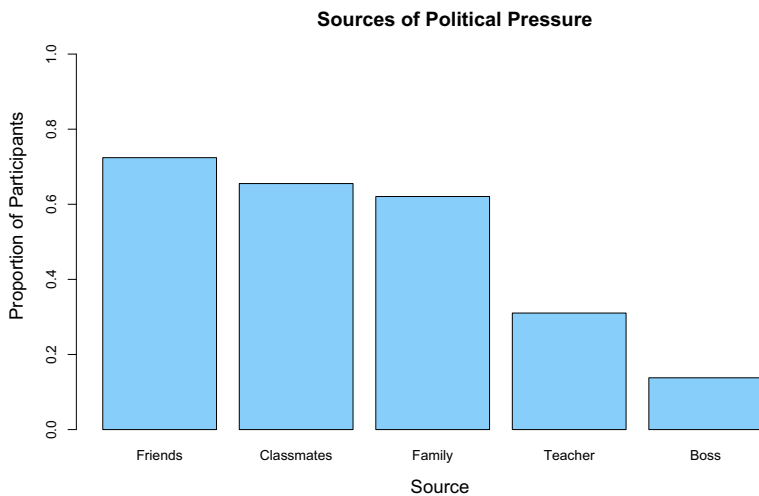


Fig. 6 Of the participants who reported feeling pressure to hold a particular political opinion, this shows the proportion of participants reporting feeling this pressure from each source

We also investigated participants' previous experiences with pressure to hold particular political opinions through self-report methods. Of the participants who answered the question, 63 % reported having felt pressured to hold a particular political opinion in their daily lives. There was not a significant difference in the number of students reporting prior feelings of political pressure between the two treatment groups. Of those participants indicating feeling this pressure, the overwhelming majority identified friends, family, and classmates as the source of the pressure. As shown in Fig. 6, 31 % of these participants reported feeling pressure from their teachers and 13.8 % reported feeling pressure from their bosses.

These descriptive statistics provide evidence for the prevalence of the pressure to have a particular political opinion and from where that pressure stems.

Conclusion

Democracy inherently depends upon diverse political opinions. Huckfeldt et al. (2004) boldly argue that “political disagreement and heterogeneity constitute the lifeblood of democratic politics” (24). This necessary condition for democracy is diminished in a society where people face psychological barriers to participating and exchanging ideas freely. Our two studies show that people both expect others to hide their true political opinions and actually do so themselves: while approximately 33 % of respondents expect a character to conform in a vignette, approximately two-thirds of respondents conform their opinions in actual discussions. We note that the situations in which the hypothetical character or participant found him or herself were neither threatening nor excessively contentious. The treatments in our experiments simply created a situation in which the participant had reason to expect that others held different political viewpoints. Any pressure participants felt to adhere to a majority opinion were derived internally, not from any explicit repercussions for failing to agree.

We acknowledge that there are some limitations with this study. Our sample sizes were small, which could mean that some of our analyses are underpowered. Our sample also consisted of college students, which is a population particularly susceptible to conformity (Sears 1986). However, our sample was drawn from political science courses, meaning that the participants probably have a greater interest in politics and probably have more political interactions than average Americans, which should make it harder to find an effect.

Our measurement of conformity in Study 2 was particularly conservative. Simply movement in the direction of the confederates is not enough to be considered conformity by either of our measures. Participants had to effectively cross the midpoint on a given response scale for their behavior to be considered conformity. Not only does this operationalization fully capture the concept of conformity—such that individuals allow others to assume agreement when there is no change in opinion—but it also reduces noise in the measure; it is unlikely that participants would undergo true attitude change over the course of the study because they were surveyed only three days before and three days after the lab session. Our measures of conformity are more conservative than the only other lab experimental evidence of political conformity (Leviton and Verhulst 2015), which only requires participants to move in the direction of the confederates. Our measure of conformity excludes simple changes in the magnitude of agreement or disagreement, as a change from “strongly agree” to “agree” is not a meaningful expression of conformity. We require individuals to shift from some form of agreement to some form of disagreement (or vice versa), which we argue is a cleaner—and more conservative—measure of conformity.

The distinction between potential and pure conformity is also important. For both measures, we find that participants in the treatment condition, who gave their responses last, conformed more frequently than participants in the control condition who gave their responses first. However, this difference is only statistically significant by standard thresholds for potential conformity. We suspect that the lack of statistical significance

for pure conformity is a function of the subtlety of our treatment, the conservative nature of the measurement, and our small sample size. The randomization inference results bolster our suggestion that individuals in the treatment condition conformed more frequently than those in the control condition for both potential and pure conformity. Furthermore, individual differences are likely influential in the underlying propensity to conform. Potential conformity did not require participants to give the same responses on the pretest and posttest. This means that the treatment could have actually led to attitude change in a three day follow up. Levitan and Verhulst (2015) find evidence for persistent attitude change after a similar lab experience, so this could be a plausible explanation. It also could be the result of response bias as participants might have remembered conforming in the lab and decided to give the same response as the lab session.

Both studies employed treatment groups where each condition had the possibility of creating discomfort: in the first study, we compared two types of environments that are thought to be stressful—partisan competition versus partisan minority status—and in the second study, the subject was in an opinion minority in both conditions, just more obviously so in the treatment condition. Thus, it was intentionally difficult to detect differences between treatment groups. The pressure in Study 2 was much less explicit than that of Study 1, but the fact that there were results suggesting that conformity is an expected and observed outcome in both conditions in both studies strengthens our argument that conformity is prevalent. Furthermore, there is evidence in Study 1 that individual level differences likely matter as much as the context in explaining the extent to which a person conforms; while the Partisan Minority condition did increase the reported expectation of conformity, the extent to which a subject anticipated the character to be uncomfortable, regardless of the context or the provocation, was strongly related to anticipated conformity. Exploration of the characteristics that make individuals uncomfortable in political interactions, especially when they are in an opinion minority position, will be a fruitful step forward in future research.

Our findings are not at odds with other work suggesting that political conformity and homogeneity are *not* prevalent (Huckfeldt et al. 2004). Recall that this body of research conceptualizes conformity as actual attitude change. We, in contrast, consider conformity to be a defense mechanism whereby individuals *publicly* express political views that differ from their private beliefs, giving others the impression that everyone is in agreement. Our results have no bearing on the debate over the extent of private or public political disagreement in social networks. But, our theory actually depends on individuals being exposed to political disagreement, which situates our study nicely within the political discussion network literature.

Although participants did not engage in a full deliberation in the lab experiment in Study 2, nor was there a full discussion previewed in the vignette experiment in Study 1, the results of these studies have implications for the deliberative democracy literature. The evidence presented in this paper that individuals in political opinion minorities are less comfortable and less likely to express their true political opinions to the group indicates that group deliberations might not fully reflect the nature of the opinions of the group. Karpowitz et al. (2012) and Karpowitz and Mendelberg (2007) discuss the importance of representation of minority voices in deliberations, but this does not fully capture the extent to which voices might be silenced due to pressures to

conform. Future work should try to integrate these theories together to examine the impact that conformity pressures have on deliberation.

We have identified many avenues for future research on political conformity. We believe that this initial, and conservative, evidence positions researchers well to move forward to better understand the mechanisms and implications of political conformity. We suspect that individual differences in personality, social anxiety, and conflict avoidance influence the propensity to conform and these differences should be explored in more detail and in samples with more diversity on these dimensions than those used in these studies. Similarly, there is much work to be done exploring variation in conformity across issue types. Our studies here are not well-suited to explore this because questions had different response scales, making it difficult to compare across issues. Future work should consider variation in conformity between social and economic issues, and “easy” and “hard” issues. There are many opportunities to extend this work to better understand other political phenomena.

Our results suggest that individuals are less comfortable in the political minority than in an environment of opinion diversity. While there is disagreement about the extent to which geography is linked to polarization, one of the consequences of sorting based on political opinion is that while more people will find themselves surrounded by like minded others, increasing numbers of people will also find themselves in settings where their viewpoints are in the minority. Thus, our results suggest that it is possible that one of the consequences of the contemporary, polarized political landscape is increased political conformity, as opinion minorities conform to the opinions of those around them. While the implications of political conformity are speculative, we provide strong evidence that it is a potential behavioral consequence of being in a political opinion minority. We seek to explore the mechanisms motivating this behavior in future work and to use this knowledge to theorize ways to reduce political conformity. Ultimately, individuals alter their publicly stated political views in the presence of opposing others, behaving like political chameleons, temporarily abandoning their true political opinions to conform to others who disagree.

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

Ethical Approval All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. This article does not contain any studies with animals performed by any of the authors.

Informed Consent Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Appendix

See Fig. 7, Tables 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10.

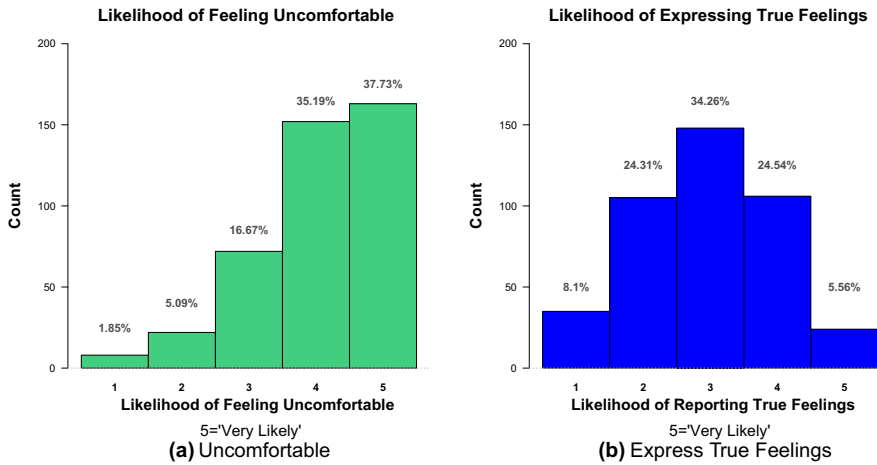


Fig. 7 Distribution of Study 1 dependent variables. **a** shows the distribution of responses to the question “What is the likelihood that Sally feels uncomfortable answering this question?” **b** shows the distribution of responses to the question “What is the likelihood that Sally expresses her true opinion to the group?”

Table 5 Distribution of key demographic variables (Study 1)

	Fall (lab)	Spring (online)	<i>p</i> value
Delivery format			
Male	0.527	0.496	0.512
White	0.721	0.707	0.75
Democrat	0.654	0.639	0.749
2012 engagement	1.483	1.173	0.047
Past 4 years engagement	2.075	2.152	0.624
Knowledge	3.502	3.446	0.432
Interest	2.532	2.398	0.031
Pay attention	4.03	3.732	0.001
Ideology	3.423	3.441	0.909
N	201	231	
	Partisan minority	Balanced partisan	<i>p</i> value
Treatment Conditions			
Male	0.512	0.509	0.951
White	0.714	0.714	0.988
Democrat	0.63	0.662	0.501
2012 engagement	1.276	1.356	0.605
Past 4 years engagement	2.076	2.153	0.624
Knowledge	3.495	3.45	0.535
Interest	2.448	2.473	0.684
Pay attention	3.833	3.905	0.435
Ideology	3.404	3.459	0.724
N	210	222	

Table 6 Mean levels of discomfort and social consequences, by reported conformity (Study 1)

	Not conform	Conform	<i>p</i> value
Reported discomfort	3.862	4.446	0.000
Look for new job	2.014	2.193	0.050
Invite colleagues for dinner	2.623	2.429	0.025

P value is from a difference of means test

Table 7 Study 2 script

Question	Treatment		Control	
	(R) participant	(D) participant	(R) participant	(D) participant
On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “very important” and 1 being “not important at all,” how important do you think it is to vote in elections?	Confederate 1: 6	Confederate 1: 6	Participant:	Participant:
	Confederate 2: 8	Confederate 2: 8	Confederate 1: 6	Confederate 1: 6
	Participant:	Participant	Confederate 2: 8	Confederate 2: 8
On a scale of 1 to 9, where 1 is that the US should continue giving military aid to Egypt, and 9 is that we should suspend all military aid to Egypt, where would you place yourself?	Confederate 1: 5	Confederate 1: 5	Participant:	Participant:
	Confederate 2: 6	Confederate 2: 6	Confederate 1: 5	Confederate 1: 5
	Participant:	Participant:	Confederate 2: 6	Confederate 2: 6
Over the past year, would you say that the economic policies of the federal government have made the nation’s economy better, worse, or haven’t they made much difference either way?	Confederate 1: Better	Confederate 1: Worse	Participant:	Participant:
	Confederate 2: Better	Confederate 2: Worse	Confederate 1: Better	Confederate 1: Worse
	Participant:	Participant	Confederate 2: Better	Confederate 2: Worse
Some people think that the most important priority for addressing America’s energy supply should be expanding exploration and production of oil, coal, and natural gas. Do you agree or disagree?	Confederate 1: Disagree	Confederate 1: Agree	Participant:	Participant:
	Confederate 2: Disagree	Confederate 2: Agree	Confederate 1: Disagree	Confederate 1: Agree
	Participant:	Participant:	Confederate 2: Disagree	Confederate 2: Agree
Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose an increase in the minimum wage from \$7.25 to \$9.00 an hour?	Confederate 1: Strongly favor	Confederate 1: Strongly oppose	Participant:	Participant:
	Confederate 2: Favor	Confederate 2: Oppose	Confederate 1: Strongly favor	Confederate 1: Strongly oppose
	Participant:	Participant:	Confederate 2: Favor	Confederate 2: Oppose
Some people believe that abortion should be permitted only if the life and health of the woman is in danger. Do you agree or disagree? Do you do so strongly?	Confederate 1: Disagree	Confederate 1: Disagree	Participant:	Participant:
	Confederate 2: Agree	Confederate 2: Agree	Confederate 1: Disagree	Confederate 1: Disagree
	Participant:	Participant:	Confederate 2: Agree	Confederate 2: Agree

Table 7 continued

Question	Treatment		Control	
	(R) participant	(D) participant	(R) participant	(D) participant
On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “very likely” and 1 being “very unlikely,” how likely would you be to vote for a candidate who supports raising taxes on the wealthy and lowering taxes on the poor?	Confederate 1: 7	Confederate 1: 3	Participant:	Participant:
	Confederate 2: 8	Confederate 2: 2	Confederate 1: 7	Confederate 1: 3
	Participant:	Participant:	Confederate 2: 8	Confederate 2: 2
Do you favor or oppose making private gun sales and sales at gun shows subject to background checks?	Confederate 1: Favor	Confederate 1: Favor	Participant:	Participant:
	Confederate 2: Favor	Confederate 2: Favor	Confederate 1: Favor	Confederate 1: Favor
	Participant:	Participant:	Confederate 2: Favor	Confederate 2: Favor
Do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose setting stricter emission limits on power plants in order to address climate change?	Confederate 1: Favor	Confederate 1: Oppose	Participant:	Participant:
	Confederate 2: Strongly favor	Confederate 2: Strongly oppose	Confederate 1: Favor	Confederate 1: Oppose
	Participant:	Participant:	Confederate 2: Strongly favor	Confederate 2: Strongly oppose
Some people believe that this country would be better off if we just stayed home and did not concern ourselves with problems in other parts of the world. Do you agree or disagree?	Confederate 1: Disagree	Confederate 1: Agree	Participant:	Participant:
	Confederate 2: Disagree	Confederate 2: Agree	Confederate 1: Disagree	Confederate 1: Agree
	Participant:	Participant:	Confederate 2: Disagree	Confederate 2: Agree
On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “very likely” and 1 being “very unlikely,” how likely would you be to vote for a candidate who supports the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, also known as Obamacare?	Confederate 1: 8	Confederate 1: 2	Participant:	Participant:
	Confederate 2: 7	Confederate 2: 3	Confederate 1: 8	Confederate 1: 2
	Participant:	Participant:	Confederate 2: 7	Confederate 2: 3
What is your feeling, do you think the government is getting too powerful or do you think the government is not getting too strong?	Confederate 1: Not getting too strong	Confederate 1: Getting too powerful	Participant:	Participant:
	Confederate 2: Not getting too strong	Confederate 2: Getting too powerful	Confederate 1: Not getting too strong	Confederate 1: Getting too powerful
	Participant:	Participant:	Confederate 2: Not getting too strong	Confederate 2: Getting too powerful

Table 7 continued

Question	Treatment		Control	
	(R) participant	(D) participant	(R) participant	(D) participant
On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “very likely” and 1 being “very unlikely,” how likely would you be to vote for a candidate who supports deference to the states on gay marriage?	Confederate 1: 3	Confederate 1: 7	Participant: 7	Participant: 7
	Confederate 2: 2	Confederate 2: 8	Confederate 1: 3	Confederate 1: 7
	Participant: 2	Participant: 8	Confederate 2: 2	Confederate 2: 8
On a scale of 1 to 10, with 10 being “ver likely” and 1 being “very unlikely,” how likely would you be to vote for a candidate who supports cutting spending on programs like Medicaid and Medicare?	Confederate 1: 2	Confederate 1: 8	Participant: 2	Participant: 8
	Confederate 2: 3	Confederate 2: 7	Confederate 1: 2	Confederate 1: 8
	Participant: 3	Participant: 7	Confederate 2: 3	Confederate 2: 7

This table shows the script used by the confederates. The treatment condition columns show the participant responding last to each question and the control condition columns show the participant going first. Within each treatment condition, you can see the responses the confederates gave, depending on the participant’s partisanship

Table 8 Study 2 balance table—all participants

	Control	Treatment	<i>p</i> value
Democrat	0.55	0.79	0.07
Female	0.59	0.56	1.00
White	0.76	0.71	0.85
2012 engagement	1.24	1.62	0.38
Democrat, Female, and White reflect proportions in each treatment condition. The remaining variables reflect the means in each treatment condition. Table includes participants who did not complete the posttest	Past 4 years engagement 1.93	1.85	0.85
	Knowledge 4.24	4.18	0.78
	Interest 2.39	2.53	0.39
	Pay attention 3.46	3.85	0.09
	Ideology 3.62	2.85	0.06
	N 29	34	

Table 9 Study 2 balance table for those who completed posttest

	Control	Treatment	<i>p</i> value
Democrat	0.48	0.70	0.23
Female	0.65	0.56	0.76
White	0.74	0.78	1.00
2012 engagement	1.26	1.74	0.36
Democrat, Female, and White reflect proportions in each treatment condition. The remaining variables reflect the means in each treatment condition. Table only includes participants who completed the posttest.	Past 4 years engagement 2.00	1.91	0.86
	Knowledge 4.35	4.04	0.25
	Interest 2.32	2.44	0.55
	Pay attention 3.41	3.83	0.14
	Ideology 3.78	3.13	0.18
	N 23.00	23.00	

Table 10 Study 2 Summary Statistics

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Whole Sample					
Democrat	63	0.683	0.469	0	1
Ideology	63	3.206	1.588	1	6
Female	62	0.565	0.500	0	1
White	63	0.730	0.447	0	1
2012 engagement	63	1.444	1.702	0	6
Past 4 years engagement	63	1.889	1.557	0	7
Political knowledge	63	4.206	0.919	2	5
Political interest	62	2.468	0.620	1	3
Pay attention	62	3.677	0.883	2	5
Potential conformity	63	1.841	1.167	0	4
Completed posttest					
Democrat	46	0.587	0.498	0	1
Ideology	46	3.457	1.643	1	6
Female	46	0.609	0.493	0	1
White	46	0.761	0.431	0	1
2012 engagement	46	1.500	1.761	0	6
Past 4 years engagement	46	1.957	1.699	0	7
Political knowledge	46	4.196	0.885	2	5
Political interest	45	2.378	0.650	1	3
Pay attention	45	3.622	0.936	2	5
Potential conformity	46	1.848	1.229	0	4
Did not complete posttest					
Democrat	17	0.941	0.243	0	1
Ideology	17	2.529	1.231	1	6
Female	16	0.438	0.512	0	1
White	17	0.647	0.493	0	1
2012 engagement	17	1.294	1.572	0	4
Past 4 years engagement	17	1.706	1.105	0	3
Political knowledge	17	4.235	1.033	2	5
Political interest	17	2.706	0.470	2	3
Pay attention	17	3.824	0.728	3	5
Potential conformity	17	1.824	1.015	0	3

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Pilot Data

Pilot Study 1: Stressful Dimensions of the Political Sphere

In the fall of 2010, as part of a set of studies run on a sample of 280 undergraduates at a large public university in the West, subjects were asked about their anticipated emotional response to a set of 13 diverse stimuli consisting of a variety of political situations that people could encounter in their political environment, especially the environment of a competitive or salient election. The goal of this pilot study was to characterize the political environment, differentiating what aspects of the routine encounters a person has are likely to provoke emotion, and whether different emotions are provoked by different scenarios. Respondents were presented with these instructions:

How do you feel about politics? Place a 0 in the corresponding cell in the table below if the political situation does not elicit the stated emotion. If the situation does elicit that emotion, place a number in the cell that corresponds to the strength of your emotional reaction, from 1 (weak) to 5 (strong). A political situation may evoke more than one emotion.

The following stimuli were placed in a table with four other columns labeled “Anxious”, “Angry”, “Enthusiastic”, and “Don’t Know.”

- Living in a community where most of your neighbors affiliate with a political party you don’t support
- Seeing bumper stickers or yard signs in your neighborhood for candidates or parties you don’t support
- Talking with your neighbors or friends about politics when you agree on most things
- Talking with your neighbors or friends about politics when you disagree on most things
- Being the only person in your group of friends who supports a candidate, a party, or a political issue
- Reading a poll predicting the opposition’s candidate is likely to win an important race
- Seeing political protests in some other city depicted on TV
- Seeing live political protests in your area
- Watching a political debate on television
- Receiving a political email forward with which you disagree
- Receiving a political email forward with which you agree
- Reading a friend’s post in your Facebook news feed that expresses political views with which you disagree
- Reading a friend’s post in your Facebook news feed that expresses political views with which you agree

The order of the stimuli was randomized across respondents (Fig. 8).

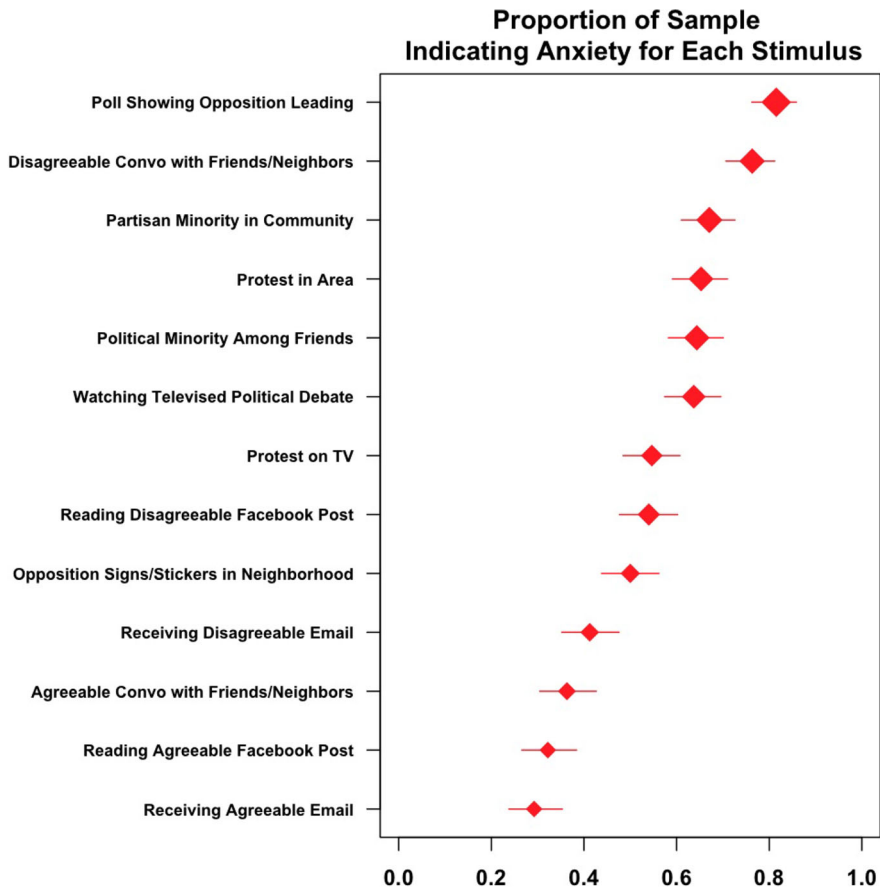


Fig. 8 Proportion of participants reporting that they would experience anxiety (marked >3) on each item in the pilot study

Pilot Study 2: Free Response Answers about Political Stress

To explore our hypotheses, we took advantage of Amazon's Mechanical Turk platform. Mechanical Turk is an online environment where individuals can hire others to accomplish tasks in return for monetary compensation (see Berinsky et al. 2012 for a more complete discussion). These tasks can be completed by anyone with access to Mechanical Turk, in other words, anyone with a computer and an internet connection. Some political scientists have voiced concerns about using the Internet population for research given characteristics unique to its members. For example, Ansolabehere and Schaffner (0000) argue that the Internet population is somewhat more knowledgeable than the off-line population. However, some evidence suggests this may result from respondents supplementing what they know by using Google or other Internet sources Burnett (2012) (see also footnote 23 in Berinsky et al. 2012). Likewise, while disproportionate numbers of groups such as the disabled, elderly,

poor, and minorities remain off-line, increasing Internet penetration has made this coverage bias critique less consequential (Ansolabehere and Schaffner 0000).

Recently, political scientists have begun using Mechanical Turk to recruit subjects for computer-based experiments. Berinsky et al. (2012) examined the validity of experiments using the Mechanical Turk platform, finding that it often provides more representative samples than the typical student and convenience samples drawn for experimental research. Moreover, they determined that threats to validity including heterogeneous treatment effects, subject attentiveness, and the prevalence of habitual survey takers offer only minor issues in practice. Perhaps most conclusively, they replicate findings from existing experimental research in the social sciences. The findings (Berinsky et al. 2012) present suggest that drawing subjects from the Internet population provides comparable results to taking subjects from a university's undergraduate population.⁷

We gathered our data using a survey programmed in Qualtrics. A link to the survey was placed in the Mechanical Turk environment with the task title "Survey of Personal Behavior and Personality." It was available in the two weeks preceding election day in 2012, from October 20 to November 6. The completion rate was 92 %, and we have complete responses for 1,834 respondents for most analyses. The survey included batteries to evaluate a respondent's social anxiety level using the SIAS scale, personality (using the Ten Item Personality Scale (TIPI) Gosling et al. 2003), and standard survey questions for demographics, political interest, information seeking, and political behavior. Specific question wording can be found in the appendix. Approximately halfway through the survey, a question was included to verify that subjects were reading the instructions and not simply answering questions randomly.

The free response answers were embedded into an experiment at the end of the survey. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four groups: a control that skipped the treatment, one asked to write about three things in her daily life that cause stress, one asked to write three things about politics that cause stress, and one asked to name three things that brighten life. Participants' answers were then displayed on the screen and the subjects were asked to confirm their responses. Although we do not analyze the results of the experiment in this paper, we do use the free-response answers generated by subjects in the "political stress" condition.⁸

In total, 440 respondents were in the "political stress" condition, generating a total of 1320 free response answers. We coded these responses during the spring of 2013. Research assistants familiar with the project designed a coding scheme and trained three students completely unfamiliar with the project in the actual implementation of the scheme. Responses were first coded into three broad categories of stressors: the process of politics, policy issues, and political

⁷ The data used in this paper were primarily gathered for the purposes of conducting a survey experiment. We recognize the challenges of drawing inferences using Mechanical Turk for survey-based analysis, and consider these results preliminary.

⁸ The wording read: "People often find that there are many things about politics that bring stress to their lives, such as negative campaigning, contentious disagreements between their friends or neighbors, or the words or actions of politicians. Being as specific as possible, please list up to three things relating to politics that add stress to your life."

participation. Over 96 % of all answers were coded into one of these three categories, and the rates of agreement between the coders exceeded 80 % at the category level. Responses were then further coded into sub-categories and topics. Intercoder agreement at the sub-category level ranged from 75–80 % and agreement at the topic level ranged from 70–75 %. More detailed information about the validity of the coding process is available from the authors upon request. The table below shows the results for the 21.97 % of responses that were coded into the “participation” category (Table 11, 12, 13, and 14).

Table 11 Data from the second pilot study

	Percent of sub category
Sub-category: politics and respondent	
42.76 % of participation category	
Understanding politics or determining beliefs	22.58
Staying updated	4.84
Election uncertainty	23.39
Effect of politics on respondent	14.52
Political powerlessness	16.13
Expressing political views	0.81
Voting and registration processes	12.10
Other	5.65
Sub-category: politics and respondent’s social network	
57.24 % of participation category	
Opinions expressed by members of respondent’s social network	43.37
Interpersonal interactions	55.42
Other	1.20

Table 12 Model control variables

Variable	Question wording	Scale
Female	What is your gender?	1 = female, 0 = male
White	What is your race? (White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Hispanic or Latino, Other)	1 = white, 0 = not white
2012 engagement	Please indicate whether you did any of the following activities during the 2012 elections—Check all that apply: (a) Talked to any people to try to get them to vote for or against one of the parties or candidates, (b) went to any political meetings, rallies, speeches, or dinners in support of a particular candidate, (c) wore a campaign button, put a campaign sticker on your car, or placed a sign in your window or yard, (d) did any other work for one of the parties or candidates, (e) contributed money to an individual candidate running for office, (f) contributed money to a political party, (g) contributed money to any other group that supported or opposed candidates	Sum of all activities (0–7)

Table 12 continued

Variable	Question wording	Scale
Knowledge	(a) Do you happen to know how many times an individual can be elected President of the United States under the current laws? (b) Is the U.S. federal deficit—the amount by which the government’s spending exceeds the amount of money it collects—now bigger, about the same, or smaller than it was during most of the 1990s? (c) For how many years is a United States Senator elected—that is, how many years are there in one full term of office for a U.S. Senator? (d) What is Medicare? A program run by the U.S. federal government to pay for old people’s health care, a program run by state governments to provide health care to poor people, a private health insurance plan sold to individuals in all 50 states, a private non-profit organization that runs free health clinics (e) On which of the following does the U.S. federal government currently spend the least? Foreign aid, Medicare, National defense, Social security	Sum of correct answers (0–5)
Interest	Some people don’t pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you were very much interested, somewhat interested or not very interested in the political campaigns in 2012?	1 = not much interested, 2 = somewhat interested, 3 = very much interested
Partisan attachment	Identification with a Psychological Group scale from Greene (2002). 10 items measured on a 5 point scale	5 (least attached)—50 (most attached)
Ideology	We hear a lot of talk these days about liberals and conservatives. Here is a seven-point scale on which the political views that people might hold are arranged from extremely liberal to extremely conservative. Where would you place yourself on this scale, or haven’t you thought much about this?	1 = extremely liberal, 2 = liberal, 3 = slightly liberal, 4 = moderate; middle of the road, 5 = slightly conservative, 6 = conservative, 7 = extremely conservative, 8 = haven’t thought about it much

Table 13 Study 2 regression models: potential conformity

	Dependent variable			
	Potential Conformity			
	Base model	Study controls	Demographic controls	Political controls
Condition	0.483** (0.195)	0.471** (0.196)	0.499** (0.197)	0.361 (0.225)
Knew purpose		−0.432 (0.270)	−0.449* (0.272)	−0.545* (0.293)

Table 13 continued

	Dependent variable			
	Potential Conformity			
	Base model	Study controls	Demographic controls	Political controls
Order A		0.226 (0.189)	0.287 (0.195)	0.265 (0.213)
Female			0.129 (0.193)	0.091 (0.210)
White			-0.115 (0.209)	-0.078 (0.227)
2012 engagement				0.027 (0.065)
Political knowledge				-0.016 (0.111)
Political interest				-0.034 (0.181)
Partisan attachment				0.020 (0.021)
Ideology				0.014 (0.067)
Constant	0.322** (0.158)	0.274 (0.204)	0.248 (0.282)	-0.027 (0.758)
Observations	63	63	62	61
Log likelihood	-95.456	-93.254	-91.168	-89.130
Akaike inf. crit.	194.912	194.508	194.337	200.261

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* $p > 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

Table 14 Study 2 regression models: pure conformity

	Dependent variable			
	Pure conformity			
	Base model	Study controls	Demographic controls	Political controls
Condition	0.470 (0.329)	0.442 (0.331)	0.438 (0.333)	-0.133 (0.392)
Knew purpose		-0.440 (0.420)	-0.481 (0.425)	-0.497 (0.475)
Order A		-0.105 (0.322)	-0.153 (0.330)	-0.200 (0.347)
Female			0.303 (0.342)	0.158 (0.358)

Table 14 continued

	Dependent variable			
	Pure conformity			
	Base model	Study controls	Demographic controls	Political controls
White			0.431 (0.428)	0.665 (0.478)
2012 engagement				0.008 (0.109)
Political knowledge				-0.143 (0.190)
Political interest				-0.169 (0.317)
Partisan attachment				0.062 (0.037)
Ideology				-0.304** (0.133)
Constant	-0.427* (0.258)	-0.261 (0.318)	-0.758 (0.517)	-0.035 (1.417)
Observations	46	46	46	45
Log likelihood	-52.708	-52.081	-51.161	-44.151
Akaike inf. crit.	109.416	112.162	114.323	110.303

Tables formatted with `stargazer` Hlavac (2015)

* $p < 0.1$; ** $p < 0.05$; *** $p < 0.01$

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