

Do Confident People Behave Differently?

THE ROLE OF DEFENSIVE CONFIDENCE IN PARTISAN DEFECTION,
ATTENTION TO POLITICS, AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

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PEOPLE'S CONFIDENCE in their ability to defend their positions against attacks—defensive confidence—can influence information-search and social-interaction patterns and consequently can induce attitudinal and behavioral change. For example, people who are high in defensive confidence are more likely to examine counter-attitudinal information and, as a result, change those attitudes (Albarracín and Mitchell 2004). This finding contradicts the common wisdom that compared to individuals who doubt their defensive abilities, those who are confident will be *less* likely to change their attitudes or to act in ways that contradict those attitudes. One reason for this counterintuitive finding is that those with higher defensive confidence pay greater attention to counter-attitudinal information (Albarracín and Mitchell 2004). Thus, while recent political science research has demonstrated that citizens prefer to seek out attitude-confirming evidence, which results in attitude polarization (Taber and Lodge 2006), our argument is that individual differences in defensive confidence moderate these information-seeking tendencies. In a similar vein, people who are high in defensive confidence may be more prone to participate in political activities promoting their initial attitudes than people with low defensive confidence.

This chapter reports analyses drawn from the 2006 American National Election Studies Pilot Study. The inclusion of an item on defensive confidence in this ANES study was of crucial importance for shedding light on this concept and its political implications. For starters, previous research on defensive confidence was based on small samples collected in experimental settings. In contrast, the 2006 ANES Pilot Study provided a unique opportunity to collect data on defensive confidence levels among a sample of 675 respondents. In addition,

the pilot study included valuable information on other political variables, including party defection, attention to politics and government, attention to the news, and participation, thus allowing us to test a number of hypotheses on defensively confident and nonconfident people.

Our central focus is to investigate the extent to which defensive confidence influences partisan defection and affects other political behaviors. In addition, there are a number of interrelated questions that we seek to answer: Do levels of defensive confidence differ across demographic and ethnic groups? What can we learn about citizens' attention to politics and government affairs and to the news? Are these forms of attention related to defensive confidence and partisan defection? Are people with higher levels of defensive confidence more likely to participate in politics than people with lower levels of defensive confidence? In what follows, we first provide an overview of defensive confidence and its development in the literature. We then present our analyses of the influence of defensive confidence on partisan defection, attention to government and politics, attention to the news, and political participation. Along the way, we relate these findings to other work in political science and social psychology.

DEFENSIVE CONFIDENCE: ORIGIN AND CONSEQUENCES

People's confidence in their ability to defend their attitudes from attack stems from several personality, cognitive, and social factors (see Albarracín and Mitchell 2004 for details). For example, people who lack confidence in their ability to control events in their lives (Ajzen 1991; Rotter 1966; Bandura 1997), and people with low self-esteem (Rosenberg 1989), also doubt their ability to defend their attitudes when under attack. Similarly, the fear of negative evaluation from social interaction (Watson and Friend 1969) can decrease defensive confidence. Furthermore, high self-monitors (Snyder 1974, 1987; see chapter 3, by Berinsky and Lavine, in this volume) perceive that they have a greater ability to self-defend than low self-monitors. Finally, people who successfully counterargue persuasive communications, such as those who are high in the need for cognition or intelligence (Petty and Cacioppo 1986), appear to develop a stronger sense of defensive confidence than individuals who are low in the need for cognition and who counterargue external information less effectively. Despite the fact that defensive confidence correlates with other individual characteristics, 70% of its variance is unaccounted for by them (Albarracín and Mitchell 2004). This finding suggests that these individual differences are unique and deserving of attention in the study of political behavior.

Critical to our analysis, defensive confidence is a trait likely to influence information-selection and social-interaction patterns and to eventually trigger attitude and behavioral change. People who are confident that their attitudes will survive future challenges are presumably willing to examine counter-attitudinal evidence. Subsequently, this exposure to counter-attitudinal information can produce change in a direction opposite to their initial attitudes (Albarracín and Mitchell 2004). In contrast, people who doubt their defensive ability may prefer pro-attitudinal information to information that challenges their perspectives (see also Byrne 1961; Olson and Zanna 1982; for related views in other domains, see Tesser 2001). For example, proabortion attitudes have been shown to more strongly predict preference for pro-choice information among people with high defensive confidence than among people with low defensive confidence. Similar findings emerged when attitudes about euthanasia and gun control were studied. Increased exposure to counter-attitudinal information among those high in defensive confidence is in turn associated with greater vulnerability to attitude change (Albarracín and Mitchell 2004). Ironically then, attitudes about political issues are more likely to change when defensive confidence increases exposure to counter-attitudinal information.

What can we expect about the effect of defensive confidence on electoral behavior? Let us imagine two members of the Democratic Party who exhibit different levels of defensive confidence. The defensively confident Democrat may watch the right-wing U.S. television news network *Fox News*, expecting to remain unaffected by the show's unsympathetic attitude toward the Obama administration. Counter to this confidence, however, this exposure to counter-attitudinal information may modify the viewer's attitudes and even future voting choices. In contrast, the defensively doubtful Democrat may watch the Democratic-leaning Comedy Central show *The Daily Show with Jon Stewart*, expecting that this show will support Democratic views on the political issues of the day. By avoiding information that contradicts Democratic attitudes, this second Democrat will be less likely to change political views and defect from the Democratic Party.

From the review presented above, we derived two interrelated hypotheses, which are tested below. First, we were interested in investigating the relationship between defensive confidence and the likelihood of deserting to the opposition party. Given the enormous impact of partisanship on vote choices, partisan defection can be considered an extreme example of attitude and behavior change—a “tough case” test of our hypotheses. For this purpose, we tested associations between defensive confidence and partisan defection in the 2006 U.S. House and Senate elections. In addition, we set out to discover the link between defensive confidence and partisan defection by exploring the pos-

sibility that people who trust their abilities to self-defend may also pay more attention to politics and the news.

Defensive confidence was also expected to affect patterns of social interaction and, thus, political participation. People who are confident in their abilities to defend their own attitudes may be more likely to become involved in activities that promote these attitudes. In contrast, people who feel that they cannot defend their positions when these positions come under attack may shy away from political participation. Consistent with these possibilities, Albarracín and Mitchell (2004) found that defensive confidence was positively correlated with political participation (Roper 1965) and negatively correlated with political alienation (Malik 1982). Accordingly, we hypothesized that people with higher levels of defensive confidence will be more likely to engage in different forms of participation than people with lower levels of this trait.

DATA AND ANALYSIS

In past studies (Albarracín and Mitchell 2004), defensive confidence has been measured with a twelve-item scale, with response options ranging from 1 (not at all characteristic of me) to 5 (extremely characteristic of me). Examples of items from that scale include: “During discussions of issues I care about, I can successfully defend my ideas; I have many resources to defend my point of view when I feel my ideas are under attack”; and “Compared to most people, I am able to maintain my own opinions regardless of what conflicting information I receive.” The 2006 ANES Pilot Study included a single item to measure defensive confidence. Specifically, all respondents were asked: “If you wanted to defend an opinion of yours, how successfully do you think you could do that? Extremely successfully, very successfully, moderately successfully, slightly successfully, or not successfully at all?” We believe this item accurately captures the idea of defensive confidence, independently of how much a person cares about an issue and how her or his ability to defend ideas compares to this ability in other people. For the analyses reported here, this variable was scored so that higher values reflect higher levels of defensive confidence.

As Figure 4.1 shows, the overall level of defensive confidence among respondents was moderately high, and a large majority of respondents (82%) manifested that they could defend their opinions “very” or “moderately successfully.” In turn, a very small proportion of participants (1%) felt they could not defend their opinions successfully at all. It is also worth noting that the question proved intelligible for respondents and that only 1% of participants reported “not knowing” their level of defensive confidence.

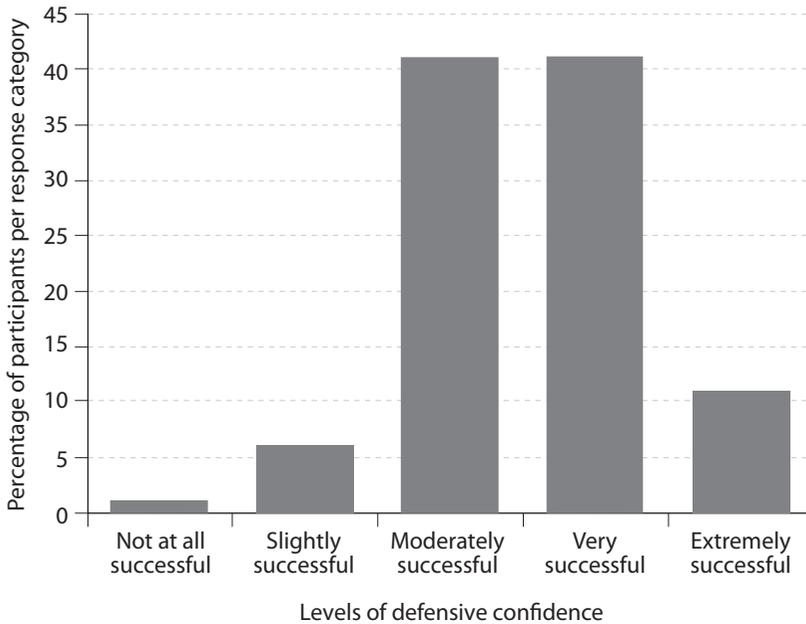


Figure 4.1. Self-reported level of defensive confidence

Next, we considered the relationships among the various demographic characteristics and the reported level of defensive confidence. For this purpose, we estimated associations of defensive confidence with age ($M = 51.54$; $SD = 16.06$), gender (1 for males, 2 for females; the sample was 53.9% female), and education (no high school, 5.2%; high school, 25.3%; education beyond high school but below college, 32.5%; college degree, 20.7%; and advanced degree, 15.9%). The estimated associations as well as relevant means appear in table 4.1. Males and more educated participants were more likely to report higher levels of defensive confidence than females and less educated participants. As for gender, these findings are consistent with a number of studies establishing the lower levels of women's (versus men's) self-confidence in various contexts, such as secondary teaching institutions (Kalaian and Freeman 1994), academic settings (Che 2003), and supervisory roles (Instone, Major and Bunker 1983). Education may contribute to defensive confidence by boosting self-esteem (Rosenberg 1965) and increasing the cognitive resources used for self-defense (Petty and Cacioppo 1986), both of which have been linked to defensive confidence (Albarracín and Mitchell 2004).

Not surprisingly, older participants showed higher levels of defensive confidence than younger participants. As for race, (white, 80.3%; black, 10.2%; His-

TABLE 4.1
Associations with Defensive Confidence

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Statistic</i>
Age	$r = .19^{***}$
Gender	$t_{672} = 2.35^{**}$
<i>M</i> females	3.50 (SD = 0.78)
<i>M</i> males	3.64 (SD = 0.81)
Education	$r = .09^*$
Race (whites vs. nonwhites)	$t_{672} = 2.05^*$
<i>M</i> whites	3.53 (SD = 0.79)
<i>M</i> nonwhites	3.69 (SD = 0.81)
Political knowledge	$r = .10^{**}$
Party identification	$F(2, 664) = 0.31$
<i>M</i> Democrats	3.58 (SD = 0.80)
<i>M</i> Independents	3.55 (SD = 0.85)
<i>M</i> Republicans	3.53 (SD = 0.74)
Partisan strength	$r = .03$
Cynicism	$r = -.02$

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

panic, 4.1%; Asian, 2.4%; and other, 3%) we divided the sample into nonwhite (assigned a 2) and white (assigned a 1) and found that nonwhites had higher levels of defensive confidence (see table 4.1). After conducting additional analyses, we believe that this effect was due to higher levels of defensive confidence among African Americans, and we are planning to further investigate this finding.

We also considered the relationship between defensive confidence and a number of political variables, such as level of political knowledge, party identification, partisanship strength, and cynicism. For level of political knowledge, we used the interviewers' ratings on "respondent's general level of information about politics and public affairs" (2004 ANES Time Series Study; V045303). Six hundred and thirty nine respondents were rated on a five-point scale regarding political information. The distribution of the political-knowledge levels of those respondents was as follows: 24.6% were rated as very high, 34.1% as fairly high, 28.5% as average, 10.5% as fairly low, and 2.3% as low. The values of this scale were later reverse-scored so that higher values reflected higher levels of

political information. Not surprisingly, participants with higher levels of political knowledge were more likely to show higher levels of defensive confidence than participants with lower levels of political knowledge. It makes sense to speculate that the ability to defend personal positions may increase at higher levels of political knowledge. However, as we show below, the level of defensive confidence was associated with political behavior above and beyond the level of political knowledge.

We were also interested in confirming or disconfirming the lack of association between defensive confidence, on the one hand, and, on the other, party identification and partisanship strength as found in previous research (Albarracín and Mitchell 2004). Our party identification variable was based on the question (2006 ANES Pilot Study, module 19_A1), “Generally speaking, do you think of yourself as [a Republican, a Democrat / a Democrat, a Republican], an Independent, or what?” The original answers (Republican, 1; Democrat, 2; independent, 3; and other, 4) were combined into our partisanship ID variable and divided into three groups (41% Democrats, 27% independents, and 32% Republicans). We also constructed a variable reflecting partisanship strength, which separated respondents into independents (29.7%), weak partisans (28.1%), and strong partisans (45.2%). For this purpose, we used our above-described partisanship ID variable, and A2 and A3 from the 2006 ANES Pilot Study, module 19. These last two variables classified partisans as “strong” or “not very strong” Republicans and Democrats, respectively. Confirming past findings (Albarracín and Mitchell 2004), defensive confidence had no relationship to either party identification or partisan strength. Presumably, since people of different political tendencies can experience attitude change and self-defense, the levels of defensive confidence are similar across the left-right political spectrum and across degrees of dogmatism or strength. Finally, we used respondents’ answer to the question “Would you say the government is pretty much run by a few big interests looking out for themselves or that it is run for the benefit of all the people?” (V045198 from the 2004 ANES Time Series Study) as a measure of cynicism. This variable, however, had no significant correlation with defensive confidence.

Party Defection

People who feel comfortable defending their views may also eventually change those views when exposed to contradicting information. Because of this change in attitudes, these people may eventually change their political behavior. For this reason, we were interested in investigating whether defensive confidence was associated with an increased likelihood of deserting to the opposition

party, that is, of engaging in partisan defection. To be sure, most voters tend to support the candidates from their own political party, but defections to the major opposing party or to third parties have played an important role in American politics as well (Beck 1992).

The 2006 midterm elections provided an excellent opportunity to study partisan defection in congressional elections. This race constituted a true Democratic sweep in which no congressional or gubernatorial seat held by a Democrat was won by a Republican. In addition, Republicans lost control of the House and Senate, losing thirty seats to the Democrats in the former and six in the latter.¹ To test our hypotheses about the influence of defensive confidence on party defection, we built two different variables for party defection that reflect voting behavior in the 2006 U.S. House and Senate elections. The first variable asked respondents who declared that they had voted in the U.S. House election, “Was [that candidate/[NAME]] a Democrat, a Republican, or something else?” (2006 ANES Pilot Study, Mod26_15). The second variable asked respondents who declared that they had voted in the U.S. Senate election, “Was [that candidate /[NAME]] a Democrat, a Republican, or something else?” (2006 ANES Pilot Study, Mod26_18). In each case, we assigned a 1 to those persons who identified with a political party but voted for a different one (House = 9.0%; Senate = 8.4%) and a 0 to the persons who remained loyal to their political party (House = 91.0%; Senate = 91.6%).²

The logistic regression models, which appear in table 4.2, included the two versions of party defection as dependent variables, with defensive confidence as a predictor, in addition to the five controls used for all our analyses (that is, age, education, race, gender, and party identification). Furthermore, we included a number of variables commonly identified in the literature as predictors of party defection. Specifically, we incorporated strength of partisanship (mentioned above) because stronger identifiers are less likely to defect (Weisberg 2002). In addition, because defection is more likely for those with moderate levels of political knowledge (Zaller 1992), we included the interviewers’ ratings of respondents’ political knowledge (on the five-point scale described above) as a control variable. Finally, we sought to determine whether declining levels of trust in government can contribute to defection to the opposition party, presumably by hurting incumbents in two-party races or by increasing the relative success of third parties in races with three viable parties (Hetherington 1999). For this purpose, we included the indicator of cynicism described above.

We expected individuals with higher levels of defensive confidence to be

¹ Democrats actually won thirty-one seats, but one came from a third party.

²House, N = 332; Senate, N = 251.

TABLE 4.2
Logistic Regressions Predicting Party Defection

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Defection House</i>	<i>Defection Senate</i>
Defensive confidence	3.91* (.31)	0.37 (.38)
Age	1.21 (.02)	0.03 (.02)
Female	0.12 (.43)	0.00 (.55)
Education	0.47 (.16)	1.39 (.19)
African American+	0.00	0.00
European American+	0.00	0.00
Latino/a+	0.00	0.00
Asian American+	0.00	0.00
Partisan strength	7.51** (.43)	7.11** (.52)
Party identification	2.08 (.24)	3.27 (.31)
Knowledge	0.54 (.28)	2.00 (.31)
Cynicism	3.19 (.45)	1.56 (.56)
Nagelkerke R^2	.16	.19

Note: Regressions were computed by using Wald chi-square (Wald χ^2) tests. Standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$, + variables “excluded” in the stepwise regression

more likely to defect from their political party. The analyses support that expectation for the 2006 U. S. House elections. Citizens who were more confident that they could defend their views against challenges were ironically more likely to defect from their party and vote for a representative from a different political party. Surprisingly, partisanship strength had a positive association with party defection, and strong partisans were more likely to defect. Although we don't have a good explanation for this finding at this point, we believe that defensive confidence may be offsetting the effect of partisanship strength. However, defensive confidence was not significantly linked to partisan defection in the 2006 U. S. Senate election.³ One possible explanation is that the variability in defection rates in the Senate was slightly lower (although partisan strength still predicted party defection). Another possible explanation may be related to the type of information that influenced voters' choices in Senate as opposed to House races. Whereas defection rates for the 2006 U.S. House elections were partly determined by salient issues such as the Iraq War (Vandenbroek 2008),

³Zaller (2002) similarly reports very different dynamics underlying partisan defection in House and Senate races.

electoral choices in senatorial contests are often shaped by candidates' personal characteristics (Abramowitz 1988; Squire 1995). Thus, if defensive confidence increased attention to political information in the environment, the dominance of certain salient issues could have altered voters' attitudes about their representatives but not about their senators.

The 2006 midterm elections provided an opportunity to examine the impact of defensive confidence on partisan defection. We have successfully shown that one's confidence in being able to defend against challenges to one's attitudes increases the likelihood of changing electoral preferences by defecting from a political party. Next, we address an additional piece of our puzzle, namely, the relationship between defensive confidence and attention to politics. More specifically, we speculate that increased attention to politics and the consequent exposure to counter-attitudinal information may be implicated in party defection.

Attention to Politics

The main focus of this chapter is to explain the attitudes and behavior of people with high levels of defensive confidence. Presumably, people who are confident that they can defend their ideas effectively are more willing to examine both pro-attitudinal and counter-attitudinal evidence. In turn, this exposure to counter-attitudinal information may produce a change in a direction opposite to people's initial attitudes. To build this variable, we used both the traditional ANES measures (module 14_B) and the three new ones (module 14_A) and built an attention variable by *z*-scoring and averaging the scores for the questions from these two modules. The questions of module B were: "Some people don't pay much attention to political campaigns. How about you? Would you say that you have been very much interested, somewhat interested, or not much interested in the political campaigns this year?"; and "Some people seem to follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, whether there's an election going on or not. Others aren't that interested. Would you say you follow what's going on in government and public affairs most of the time, some of the time, only now and then, or hardly at all?"

In addition, the 2006 Pilot Study incorporated three new questions, with the following wording and order (module A), which were administered to the other half of the respondents: "How interested are you in information about what's going on in government and politics? Extremely interested, very interested, moderately interested, slightly interested, or not interested at all?"; "How closely to you pay attention to information about what's going on in government and politics? Extremely closely, very closely, moderately closely, slightly

closely, or not closely at all?"; "How often do you pay attention to what's going on in government and politics? All the time, most of the time, about half the time, once in a while, or never?" Scores are such that higher numbers reflect closer attention being paid to politics.

The regression results, which controlled for age, education, race, gender, party identification, partisanship strength, and knowledge, were consistent with our expectations. As shown in table 4.3, people with higher defensive confidence were also more likely to pay attention to government and politics than people with lower defensive confidence. This finding supports our contention that defensive confidence increases the likelihood of seeking out information. It will be important to establish in future research whether the political information sought out tends to support or contradict the person's own views.

In addition, we were interested in investigating whether people with higher defensive confidence were also more likely to pay attention to the news than people with lower defensive confidence. Unfortunately, the ANES Pilot Study did not include items to measure exposure and attention to media of different political orientations, which would have provided an opportunity to analyze differential exposure to pro-attitudinal or counter-attitudinal information.

We used four variables that reflect the number of minutes during which respondents paid attention to the news. "News Radio" was based on the question (module 18_A8): "On a typical day when you listen to radio news, about how much time do you spend listening to news on the radio, not including sports?" "News Internet" was based on the question (module 18_B2): "On a typical day when you watched or read the news on the Internet in the past year, about how much time did you spend watching or reading news on the Internet, not including sports?" "News Print" was based on the question (module 18_B4): "On a typical day when you read a printed newspaper during the last year, about how much time did you spend reading a newspaper, not including sports?" Finally, "News TV" was based on the question (module 18_B6): "On a typical day when you watched TV news during the last year, about how much time did you spend watching news on TV, not including sports?"

The average number of minutes respondents reported spending on news per day were 47.49 ($SD = 67.76$) for radio, 42.27 ($SD = 48.19$) for the Internet, 40.81 ($SD = 34.34$) for print media, and 64.87 ($SD = 55.90$) for television. The linear regressions presented in table 4.3 did not support an association between defensive confidence and attention to the news in the media under analysis. As mentioned above, however, we were unable to identify the political orientation of the media sources, even though defensive confidence should correlate with

TABLE 4.3
Linear Regressions Predicting Attention to Politics and Media Exposure

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Attention to politics</i>	<i>Radio</i>	<i>Internet</i>	<i>Print</i>	<i>Television</i>
Defensive confidence	.18*** (.04)	.04 (4.41)	-.74 (3.35)	-.02 (1.90)	-.02 (3.02)
Age	.24*** (.01)	.09 (.24)	-.05 (.18)	.22*** (.10)	.24*** (.16)
Female	-.12*** (.06)	-.04 (7.09)	-.16** (5.33)	-.05 (3.07)	.04 (4.83)
Education	.02 (.02)	-.01 (2.46)	-.13* (1.88)	-.01 (1.06)	-.06 (1.66)
African American	-.20*** (.20)	-.13 (21.92)	-.12 (15.45)	.00 (9.52)	.06 (15.04)
European American	-.24*** (.18)	-.15 (18.95)	-.15 (12.75)	.05 (8.31)	.01 (13.38)
Latino/a	-.15*** (.23)	-.04 (23.84)	-.04 (17.35)	.12 (10.96)	.05 (17.60)
Asian American	-.07 (.27)	-.07 (30.95)	-.09 (20.10)	.01 (13.87)	.00 (21.47)
Partisan strength	.15*** (.04)	.07 (4.20)	.04 (3.15)	.05 (1.83)	.03 (2.88)
Party identification	-.04 (.04)	.09 (4.23)	-.09 (3.06)	-.14** (1.82)	.00 (2.82)
Knowledge	.32*** (.03)	-.13* (4.00)	-.07 (3.01)	.07 (1.70)	-.02 (2.66)
Adjusted R^2	.28	.01	.05	.07	.05

Note: Linear regressions (β). Standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

exposure to *counter*-attitudinal information. For this reason, the influence of defensive confidence on media exposure requires further research.

Political Participation

Although participation is an essential component of democratic life, traditional ways of participation, such as voting, have steadily declined in the United States since the 1960s (Tam Cho 1996). The best predictors of voter turnout, namely, education and income (Leighley and Vedlitz 1999), remain relevant, but have failed to predict decreased participation in light of increasing U.S. incomes and education over time. In this section, we examine the ability of defensive confidence to shed light on different forms of political participation. As noted earlier, previous research, utilizing samples drawn from college student, has demonstrated that defensive confidence is positively associated with participation in such activities as signing petitions, attending meetings, and giving speeches (Albarracín and Mitchell 2004).

Citizens and noncitizens alike can participate in democratic societies in different ways. To test the influence of defensive confidence on participation, we examined voting, the most traditional form of participation, and two other ways of participating politically. Specifically, our regression analyses included three binomial dependent variables: voting, attempts to influence the vote of others, and attendance at political meetings and rallies. The participation variables were based on respondents' answers to the following questions: "How about you—did you vote in the elections this November?" (2006 ANES Pilot Study, Mod26_A2); "Did you try to influence the vote of others?" (2004 ANES, V045010); and "Did you attend political meetings/rallies during the campaign?" (2004 ANES, V045011). The reported levels of participation for those variables were 76.6%, 53.5%, and 9.5%, respectively.

After controlling for age, education, race, gender, party identification, and partisanship strength, the regression analyses summarized in table 4.4 indicate that defensive confidence is positively associated with all three participation variables, and very strongly linked to one form of political participation: attempting to influence the vote of others. The very act of trying to influence others requires that an individual be willing to entertain the possibility of encountering alternate viewpoints, and so people with higher levels of defensive confidence should be more likely to participate in this fashion. It is also possible that defensive confidence is more strongly implicated in triggering behaviors that promote people's attitudes, such as influencing others, than behaviors that reflect mere reaffirmations of ones' beliefs and attitudes, such as voting and participating in political rallies.

TABLE 4.4
Logistic Regressions Predicting Participation

<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>Voting</i>	<i>Trying to influence the vote of others</i>	<i>Attending political meetings and rallies</i>
Defensive confidence	-.00 (.03)	3.28** (.20)	0.45 (.20)
Age	.07 (.00)	8.26** (.01)	4.92* (.01)
Female	.04 (.04)	.02 (.19)	1.42 (.31)
Education	.13* (.01)	.12 (.06)	.29 (.11)
African American	-.05 (.11)	2.54 (.62)	6.85** (.95)
European American	.06 (.09)	.01 (.55)	5.20* (.62)
Latino/a	.01 (.12)	.06 (.70)	1.60 (.85)
Asian American	-.10 (.15)	.34 (.80)	.00 (10842.81)
Partisan strength	.17*** (.02)	14.86*** (.11)	8.79** (.20)
Party identification	.10 (.02)	.68 (.11)	.00 (.16)
Knowledge	.32*** (.02)	12.38*** (.11)	15.14*** (.19)
Nagelkerke R2	.23	.20	.18

Note: Regressions were computed by using Wald chi-square (Wald χ^2) tests. Standard errors are in parentheses.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

CONCLUSION

We have presented evidence that a person's level of defensive confidence, defined as the perceived ability to defend personal attitudes, is associated both with an increased attention to political information and with important political behavioral outcomes. This research constitutes an important first step in examining the relevance of defensive confidence for understanding electoral behavior.

Levels of defensive confidence vary as a function of gender, education, age, and ethnicity. Our findings indicated that males, more educated citizens, and younger respondents were more likely to report higher levels of defensive confidence than females, less educated citizens, and older respondents. Although the first two findings are not surprising—and confirm previous research—the relation between defensive confidence and age may deserve further investigation. In addition, the finding that nonwhites had higher defensive confidence than whites is also of interest, since there is little if any data on interethnic differences in confidence.

We also considered the relationship between defensive confidence and political variables such as political knowledge, party identification, and partisanship strength. Confirming our expectations, political knowledge was positively associated with defensive confidence, perhaps indicating that a mutually reinforcing relation exists between them. However, we also found that the level of defensive confidence can influence attitudes and behavior above and beyond the level of political knowledge. Finally, confirming previous research (Albarracín and Mitchell 2004), we showed that levels of defensive confidence are independent of party identification and partisanship strength.

We have argued that people who feel comfortable defending their views may also eventually change those views and the corresponding behaviors. As a test of this hypothesis, we examined the impact of defensive confidence on partisan defection in the 2006 U.S. House and Senate races. As predicted, defensive confidence predicted defection in the 2006 U. S. House elections, above and beyond the impact of various demographic and political variables. In the future, we hope to extend these analyses to other elections.

An important part of this chapter was intended to determine whether defensive confidence correlates with attention to politics and government affairs and attention to the news. The results of our analyses confirmed our expectations, showing that more-confident citizens were also more likely to pay attention to politics and government affairs than less confident ones. We believe that this finding supports our contention that exposure to counter-attitudinal information may be responsible for attitudinal and behavioral changes. We were not able, however, to confirm that higher levels of defensive confidence increase attention specifically to the news.

Finally, we explored the extent to which defensive confidence increases political participation. Although defensive confidence did not significantly increase the probability of voting, it did significantly increase the likelihood of attempting to influence the vote of others, consistent with the participation effects reported in Albarracín and Mitchell (2004). Although the influence of defensive confidence on participation deserves further research, this form of confidence may trigger behaviors that promote an actor's attitudes (for example, influencing others and signing petitions) without necessarily influencing mere reaffirmations of attitudes (for example, voting and participating in political rallies).

In closing, an understanding of party defection, attention to politics, and participation seems central to improving our grasp of the democratic process and people's roles in it. At the same time, elucidating citizens' behavior requires a deep psychological understanding of factors that can sometimes have unexpected influences on political behavior. Defensive confidence appears to be one such factor, operating independently of other demographic and political vari-

ables. In the future, we hope to explore other consequences of people's trust in their ability to defend their political attitudes.

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