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POLITICAL CENTRISM, PERSPECTIVE TAKING, AND OUTGROUP DEROGATION: AN INTEGRATED MODEL

David Kesler

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POLITICAL CENTRISM, PERSPECTIVE TAKING, AND OUTGROUP
DEROGATION: AN INTEGRATED MODEL

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Psychology

Murray State University

Murray, Kentucky

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

of Masters of Science in Clinical Psychology

by David Kesler

May 2020

Abstract

The relationship between perspective taking abilities, political centrism, and outgroup derogation is not defined at this time. While previous research has demonstrated a negative relationship between political centrism and outgroup derogation (Van Prooijen, Krouwel, Boiten, & Eendebak, 2015), the relationship between the other variables is unclear. Therefore, the current study sought to measure the relationship between (1) perspective taking abilities and political centrism, (2) perspective taking and outgroup derogation, (3) political centrism and outgroup derogation and lastly, (4) whether the relationship between perspective taking abilities and political outgroup derogation would be mediated by an individual's level of political centrism.

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Chapter I: Literature Review

Currently, the divide between political parties is one of the largest schisms in America. According to a 2016 survey (Pew Research Center), Americans view politicians and members of the opposing political party with more anger, fear, and contempt than at any time in the last 25 years. Fifty-five percent of Democrats surveyed said the Republican Party makes them “afraid,” while 49% of Republicans reported the same feelings about the Democratic Party. Further research in 2017 (Pew Research Center), found that 45% of Republicans and 44% Democrats were willing to express very unfavorable opinions of the opposing party. It is important to note that these ratings have more than doubled since 1994, when under 20% of either party were willing to admit to expressing very unfavorable opinions about the opposing party (2017, Pew Research Center).

The partisan divide has grown so large that it is surpassing other historical divisions, as evidenced by a 2015 study that found that partisan discrimination exceeds racial discrimination in some scenarios (Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). An even more recent study by Iyengar, and Krupenkin (2018) strengthens these findings. These researchers found that since the 1980’s, partisan in-group favoritism and outgroup animosity have become strongly associated with one another, and dislike of the opposing political party has risen above the level of positive affect we have for our own group.

This high level of disdain for one’s political opponents is causing a great deal of political animus, and contempt for the other side is a strong motivation for the participation of many in politics (Iyengar, & Krupenkin, 2018). All too often, voters will

rally against policies simply because the opposing party is promoting them. While filmed in a humorous manner, late-night comedian Jimmy Kimmel demonstrated this phenomenon well in his segment titled “Obamacare vs. Affordable Care Act.” In that piece, Americans vacillate between support or disapproval of the Affordable Care Act depending on their party affiliation and which name is used, despite the fact that it is the same piece of legislation. This anecdotal evidence is strengthened by the results of a 2012 study (Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes) which suggested that American partisans increasingly despise each other, but exposure to negative campaign messaging exhibits stronger effects on division than true differences in policy attitudes.

It is important to attempt to better understand why we have reached such a high level of political divisiveness. Spohr (2017) argues that recent technological advances and changing media consumption habits coupled with an increasingly partisan media landscape are at least partially to blame. Spohr (2017) is not the first to make such a claim. Sunstein (2001) predicted that the internet will increase political polarization by allowing individuals to participate in “echo-chambers” in which their current ideals are reinforced and strengthened and information that is contradictory to one’s worldview is either ignored or discounted. This idea is essentially an adaptation/evolution of Festinger’s (1957) concept of selective exposure/cognitive dissonance. Festinger proposed that people tend to avoid information conflicting with their own ideas and instead seek out messages they agree with in order to avoid psychological discomfort.

There is evidence that Sunstein’s prediction has come to fruition. Stroud (2010) found evidence that partisan selective exposure leads to polarization, and that polarization may lead to selective exposure as well, forming a self-perpetuating cycle of ever-

increasing partisanship. Also, Nie, Miller, Golde, Butler, and Winneg (2010) found that in general, individuals who consume news through both the internet and through television tend to be more partisan than individuals who primarily consume their news through television, and individuals who only consume news from the internet were the most partisan of all groups tested. Similarly, Tewksbury and Riles (2015) found a positive relationship between frequency of online news exposure and disagreements between Republicans and Democrats on various issues.

It is important to better understand how the internet has caused us to reach this point. First, social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook are contributing to our division, and selective exposure is one of the likely mechanisms at work here. For example, there is evidence that we shield ourselves from political news/information we do not agree with on social media. Zhu, Skoric, and Shen (2017) report that 15.6% of respondents in their research either removed content or unfriended individuals during Hong Kong's controversial Umbrella Movement protests of 2014. Selective sharing may be another complementary mechanism driving division as well: Shin and Thorson (2017) found that partisans selectively share fact-checking messages that agree with and promote their political views, while ignoring fact-checking messages that would hurt their cause.

Second, while search engines such as Google, Bing, etc. are useful tools most internet users use to navigate the internet, they are not without their flaws either. Spohr (2017) argues that due to algorithmic curation and online personalization systems, the average internet user is rarely exposed to news content that is not aligned with their personal views. Specifically, on the most popular search engines, algorithms are designed to prioritize search results that are ideologically similar to our current views and they may

even exclude results that may oppose our views. This has pushed people into what some researchers call “filter bubbles” in which ideologically opposing views are filtered out (Flaxman, Gaol, & Rao, 2016). Concerns regarding filter bubbles have been extended to Facebook and other social media sites as well, as the algorithms they use to procure customized content such as videos and news may also limit an individual's exposure to diverse ideological views. However, while algorithms may be subtly influencing us in ways we are unaware of, our own personal preferences seem to be the dominant force. A 2015 study (Bakshy, Messing, & Adamic) found that Facebook's algorithm can limit our exposure to opposing views, however, self-selection had a much stronger effect.

Although search engines, and social media play a role in our news consumption, they are not necessarily the dominant channels in which news and political information is consumed online. A 2016 study (Flaxman, et al.,) examined online browsing habits of active news readers over a period of several months (Active news readers were defined as internet users who have read at least 10 substantive news articles and at least two opinion pieces in the three-month timeframe) they found that active news consumers tended to directly seek out news outlets, and preferred outlets that they agreed with ideologically. i.e. (conservatives preferred Fox News, liberals Huffington Post). Participants less often got their news from social media, search engines, or a news aggregator website.

Lastly, although, the internet has been blamed for the rise in negative partisanship, there are other important factors as well. For much of the 20th century, television news programs strove to maintain neutrality. This is no longer the case, television stations such as Fox News cater to a specific political audience (Iyengar, Hahn, 2009). In doing so, they may provide an incomplete set of facts or present biased

opinions to sway viewers towards a particular position. Viewers who frequently consume content from these stations may acquire an inaccurate view of the opposing political party, and/or may easily recall negative information regarding their political opposition due to availability bias (Spohr, 2017). Unsurprisingly, it has been shown that people tend to prefer news stations that they perceive to be the most ideologically similar to their own views. Specifically, Iyengar, Hahn, (2009) found that conservatives tended to prefer Fox News, while avoiding the news sources of CNN and NPR, while liberal participants preferred the exact opposite. In another complementary study by Iyengar and Hahn (2008), researchers found that internet news consumption is often dictated by an individual's perceived agreement with the organizations ideology, that is, when exposed to the exact same article headline and image, conservatives were more likely to click on the link if it was provided by Fox News, whereas liberals strongly avoided Fox News and sought information from essentially any other source.

Because we are easily able to confirm preconceived biases, and shield ourselves from information we disagree with, it is possible that individuals are failing or refusing to consider the perspective of others, which causes us to be more partisan, and to derogate individuals and groups with beliefs dissimilar to ours. If partisan, agenda driven media is in fact contributing to political division, it is important to understand some of the psychological processes that are involved. Understanding these mechanisms will ideally allow us to utilize our technological resources in a more beneficial manner. Accordingly, the focus of this review will be to examine the relationship between derogation of outgroups, perspective taking abilities, and how we align ourselves politically.

Outgroup Derogation

While unfortunate, the lack of civility in politics is not particularly surprising given the results of previous research regarding intergroup conflict. Outgroup derogation is specifically defined as making or seeking negative evaluations of groups that one is not a member of, or displaying a preference for messages negatively characterizing outgroups (Jackson, Sullivan, Harnish, & Hodge, 1996). While in-group positivity/favoritism appears to be a core component of group membership, Hewstone, Rubin, and Willis (2002), note that outgroup derogation is not a required element. They cite several studies suggesting that outgroup derogation and intergroup hostility generally arise when outgroups are associated with strong emotions (e.g., fear). Similarly, Branscombe and Wann (1994) found that when an individual's valued social identity was threatened, derogation of a threat-relevant outgroup elevated collective self-esteem. In simple terms, we often speak negatively about our rivals when they make us feel insecure about ourselves and we feel better about our own group after doing so. These effects do not appear to be unique to America either; a European study found that perceptions of threatened group interests (i.e. school, culture) were causally antecedent to dislike and avoidance of foreigners and ethnic minorities. Essentially, perceiving an outgroup or its members as a threat to one's own group caused individuals to act and feel negatively towards the outgroup or to avoid them altogether (Schlueter, Schmidt, & Wagner, 2008).

Given these findings, it should not be surprising that the two sides of the political spectrum are having difficulty finding common ground. Due to partisan media messaging (Iyengar, & Hahn, 2009, Levendusky, 2013), both sides may view the other as an imminent and direct threat to the interests of their own group. Additionally, both sides of

the political spectrum have suffered electoral defeats in the past several years, which could potentially make them feel threatened and/or harm their self-esteem.

Perspective Taking

Perspective taking is a broadly defined concept. Ackerman (1996) describes it as an individual's ability to experience and describe the presentation of an object or image from different vantage points. Therefore, perspective taking relates broadly to the Piagetian concept of egocentrism. Ford (1979) defined egocentrism as "an embeddedness in one's own point of view." This means that prior to a certain stage in development, we are unable to realize that another individual's experience of the world is different from our own. As an example of this phenomenon, when asked to draw an object from the viewpoint of another person, young children are often unable to do so; instead, they usually draw the figure from their own visual perspective. However, the ability to draw from another person's perspective develops quite early in life, and children usually do not fail this task by the time they have reached kindergarten (Salatas & Flavell, 1976). Accordingly, perspective taking is largely the antithesis of egocentrism. While Ackerman's (1996) definition is not of central importance to the current research because it is a quite literal interpretation of perspective taking, involving visual images, as opposed to purely mental phenomena, it is still relevant because it highlights the fact that we do not always consider that others have mental experiences that differ from our own.

Underwood and Moore (1982) divide perspective taking into three broad categories: perceptual, social-cognitive, and affective. However, they note that the constructs are obviously interrelated and utilize similar internal processes. The perceptual component of perspective taking is the aspect previously described by Ackerman, which

involves imagining the visual image another individual is viewing. The social-cognitive form involves imagining the thoughts or motives of another, while the affective component involves imagining the feelings or concerns of another. Similarly, Bensalah, Caillies, and Anduze (2016) divide perspective taking into affective components and cognitive components as well.

Batson and Ahmad (2009) described two distinct but related forms of perspective taking: the imagine-self, and the imagine-other perspective. In the imagine-self perspective, an individual envisions how they personally would think and feel if they were in another person's role. In the imagine-other perspective, a person imagines how the other individual would think and feel given a set of circumstances. The distinction is subtle, yet important, as the different types of perspective taking have unique psychological effects. The imagine-self perspective is related to reduced stereotyping and more positive evaluations of outgroups, while the imagine-other perspective is linked to increased readiness to help a specific outgroup and increased empathic concern for specific members of outgroups.

When comparing perspective taking scores with scores on other-oriented and self-oriented measures, perspective taking has been shown to be positively correlated with other-oriented sensitivity, yet negatively correlated with self-oriented sensitivity (Davis, 1980). Davis (1980) notes that this pattern of results suggests that high perspective taking abilities are mediated by a genuine concern for others feelings and reactions as opposed to merely being concerned with how one is perceived by others; therefore, perspective taking should be conceptualized as a dimension of the larger construct of empathy. Predictably, there are multitudes of studies that describe the relationship between

perspective taking abilities and prosocial behavior/attitudes. For example, Davis (1983) found that individuals high in perspective taking ability reported less social dysfunction, were more socially competent, and exhibited higher levels of self-esteem. Additionally, Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) demonstrated that perspective-taking abilities play a role in reducing social biases. In a series of experiments, they found that higher levels of perspective taking were related to less stereotyping of outgroup members, increased overlap between the self and representations of the target group, lower levels of in-group favoritism, and more positive evaluations of the outgroup.

In addition to being positively correlated with prosocial attitudes, perspective taking has been found to be related to prosocial behaviors. Shih, Wang, Trahan Bucher, and Stotzer (2009) found that perspective taking was related to reduced prejudice and discriminatory behavior against individual members of an outgroup, the authors hypothesized that this was due to the perspective taking manipulation increasing participants empathy towards members of the out-group. However, in that research, the out-group was relatively affectively neutral to the in-group (Asians vs. white Americans). It would be interesting to explore whether Shihs et al findings extend to outgroups that elicit very strong negative reactions (e.g. opposing political parties.) There is some research to suggest that this may be the case, as a 2014 study found that perspective taking was positively correlated with increased intergroup contact with members of negatively stereotyped groups (Wang, Kenneth, Ku & Galinsky, 2014). However, this research examined contact between different social classes, as opposed to differing political parties. Differing political parties may be more difficult to unite because most

individuals choose their party affiliation, as Iyengar and Westwood (2015) points out; this may cause others to “blame” them for their beliefs or behaviors.

Political Centrism

As previously noted, high levels of perspective taking abilities have been positively correlated with prosocial behaviors and attitudes (Davis, 1983), lower levels of prejudice (Shih et al., 2009), and increased intergroup contact of negatively stereotyped groups (Wang et al., 2014). Therefore, it is important that we better our understanding of how an individual’s perspective taking abilities are involved in their willingness to cooperate with or listen to members of an opposing political party. Raising perspective taking abilities may be a key component in decreasing the high levels of animosity both parties have for each other and could help move American citizens towards a more centrist position that allows for using the best ideas from both political parties to govern. Woshinsky (2008) defines political centrism in the following way “centrism is the ideal or practice of promoting moderate policies that lie between different political extremes.” He further notes that this is most often conceptualized as part of the one-dimensional political spectrum of “left-right politics.” A centrist position seems to be associated with a less emotional approach to politics, as recent research has found that respondents at both extremes of the political spectrum tend to derogate certain outgroups more heavily than politically moderate respondents, and experience stronger negative emotions about politics, such as anger, fear, and disgust as well (Van Prooijen, Krouwel, Boiten, & Eendebak, 2015).

Rivlin (2018) makes the case that fighting between the two political factions in the United States is advancing the narrow interests of each group, yet doing little to

advance our country, stating: “If the two parties do not work together to find common ground, we are doomed either to gridlock or wild swings in policy” (“In defense of centrists,” para. 3). Events such as the passage and attempted repeal of The Affordable Care Act, the Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2018, or the confirmation of Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh are prime examples of the gridlock and policy swings Rivlin (2018) was referring to, in each scenario, one political party strongly supported the passage of a bill/confirmation, while the other strongly opposed it, and used all available means to prevent its passage or confirmation (Gramlich, 2016; Pew Research Center, 2018a, 2018b).

Summary

Numerous studies have shown that perspective taking abilities are related to how one interacts with others (2016, Shih et al., 2009, Wang et al., 2014). That is, individuals high in this ability tend not to derogate outgroups and are generally more prosocial (Shih et al., 2009, Wang et al., 2014, Davis, 1983.) Therefore, an important aim of this study was measuring if this relationship applies to political outgroups. Another goal was to measure the relationship between an individual’s perspective taking abilities and their level of political centrism, due to the fact that centrists by definition are willing to work with dissimilar people, and see the value in different ideas, they are likely to be high in perspective taking abilities. Additionally, centrism has previously been shown to be related to lower levels of outgroup derogation (Van Proijen et al., 2015), that relationship was retested in this study. Due to this potential relationship, it was predicted that some of the hypothesized influence of perspective taking on lower levels of outgroup derogation

would be reduced when simultaneously taking political centrism into consideration (see Figure 1.).

The current investigation sought to replicate and extend previous research by examining the relationship between levels of perspective taking, political centrism, and outgroup derogation, the following hypotheses were tested.

H1: There will be a negative relationship between perspective taking abilities and outgroup derogation.

H2A: There will be a positive relationship between perspective taking abilities and political centrism.

H2B: There will be a negative relationship between political centrism and outgroup derogation.

H3: The negative relationship between perspective taking and outgroup derogation will be partially mediated by political centrism (see Figure 1).

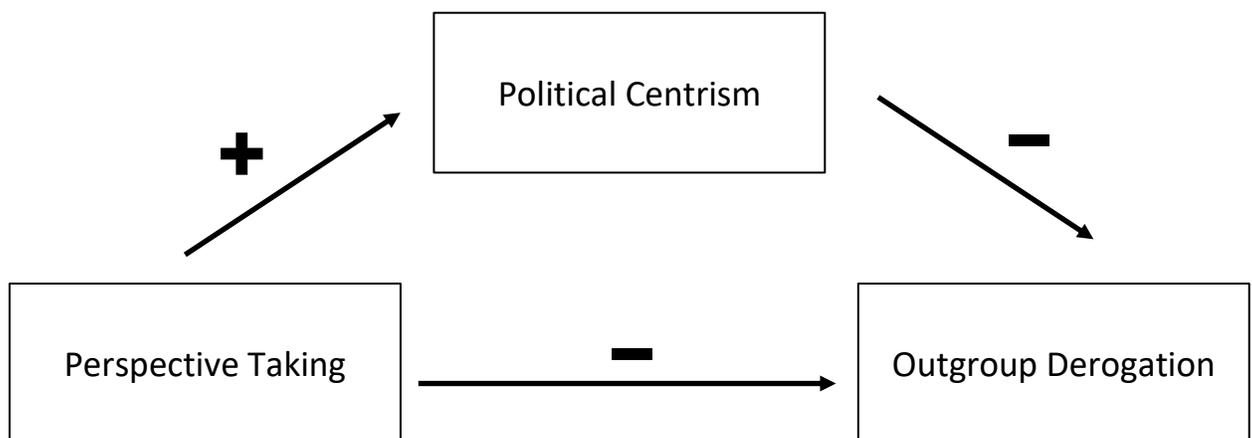


Figure 1. Hypothesized relationship between perspective taking, political centrism, and outgroup derogation.

Chapter II: Methodology

Participants

Participants were recruited through Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online crowdsourcing platform that allows researchers and others to recruit individuals to complete surveys and other tasks for financial compensation and/or other various incentives. Participation was limited to individuals who voted in the 2016 U.S. election, and participants received a small amount of financial compensation for their participation (\$.50).

The average participant age was 42.5 years old. The sample identified as approximately 56% male, 42% female, and 2% answering other. Our sample was overwhelmingly Caucasian, with approximately 81% identifying as non-Hispanic White, the remainder identified as 9% Asian or Asian American, 7% Hispanic or Latino, and 3% Black or African American. 128 individuals responded to our survey, however, only 98 provided us with analyzable data due to item omissions. Specifically, 15 individuals did not attempt the outgroup derogation measure, while the remaining 15 participants only completed the demographic section or did not even complete that portion of the survey, rendering their data unable to be used.

Materials

Upon choosing to participate in the survey and providing their consent, participants completed an online questionnaire (see Appendix I). The first section contained demographics items assessing age, gender, and racial/ethnic identity.

Political Centrism The second section contained an item asking participants to rate themselves on a political scale ranging from 0 (Very Liberal) to 10 (Very Conservative). The midpoint of that scale (5) indicates political centrism (non-partisanship), and was used as an “anchor”, thus a score of 5 would be recoded as a 0. The absolute value of the distance a participant’s response deviated from the midpoint was then used to indicate a participant’s level of centrism, thus, lower scores reflected greater levels of political centrism. In this section, we also included a screening question asking participants to indicate their political opposition. Participants who were vague about their opposition were excluded from analysis.

Perspective Taking The third section of the questionnaire contained the Perspective Taking Scale, a subscale of the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1980, 1983) According to its author; the perspective taking (PT) scale measures the reported tendency to spontaneously adopt the psychological point of view of others in everyday life. The Perspective taking scale of the IRI contains seven Likert-scale items. Response options to the IRI ranged from A (does not describe me well) to E (describes me very well). Response options were coded to reflect a numerical score, and higher overall scores reflected greater levels of perspective taking ability.

Outgroup Derogation This questionnaire is a version of a scale previously used to assess intergroup attitudes between a sample of African American and Jewish individuals (Fiebert, Horgan, & Peralta, 1999), shortened and slightly modified to assess the attitudes individuals hold towards their political opposition. Response options were coded to reflect a numerical score, with higher scores indicating higher levels of outgroup derogation.

Procedure

After being recruited from the Mturk website, participants were required to provide informed consent, participants were then directed to an online survey delivered using Lyceum Survey. They completed the measures described above. Upon completion of the surveys, participants were then directed to a debriefing page disclosing the purposes and hypotheses of the study and providing contact information to allow participants to request a report of the research findings from the researchers.

Chapter III: Results

Both political centrism and outgroup derogation exhibited positively skewed distributions but applying standard transformations (logarithmic and square root) did not substantively reduce this deviation from normality. Bootstrapping (performed to test H3) did not change the significance of any of the pathways in the mediation model.

Hypotheses H1 was tested using a linear regression, in that analysis perspective taking was used as a predictor variable of political centrism.

Hypothesis H2A, and H2B were analyzed using separate linear regressions in which perspective taking and political centrism were used as predictors of outgroup derogation.

We also tested Hypothesis 3; whether political centrism (non-partisanship) partially mediates the effect of perspective taking on outgroup derogation. This mediation model was tested with a path analysis using the Lavaan package in R version 3.6.0.

Results

Means, standard deviations, and reliability alphas (Cronbach) appear in Table 1. Correlations among the variables are shown in Table 2. The three hypotheses were tested via three linear regression analyses in which perspective taking and political centrism were incorporated as predictor variables of outgroup derogation, and perspective taking was tested as a predictor of political centrism.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Cronbach's Alphas for the Dependent Measures

Measure	Mean	SD	Alpha
PIQS	2.92	1.64	
PTT	25.67	5.85	.88
ODQCT	31.38	6.07	.91
ODQLT	26.95	6.58	.95

Note: PIQS= Level of centrism; PTT = Perspective taking total; ODQCT = Outgroup derogation conservative total; ODQLT = Outgroup derogation liberal total

Table 2

Correlations Among the Variables

	PIQS	PTT	ODQT
PIQS	--		
PTT	.09	--	
ODQT	.17	-.04	--

Note: PIQS = Level of centrism; PTT = Perspective taking total; ODQT = Outgroup derogation total.

The first regression explored the relationship between participants' level of perspective taking abilities and outgroup derogation. The effect of the predictor variables was not significant, $F(1, 96) = .17, p = .68$, inconsistent with Hypothesis 1, perspective taking did not account for a significant proportion of unique variance of outgroup derogation ($t = -.41, p = .68$).

The second regression examined the relationship between political centrism and outgroup derogation. Contrary to expectations, level of centrism was found to not be a significant predictor of outgroup derogation, $F(1, 96) = 2.79, p = .10$ ($t = 1.67, p = .10$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was not supported either.

A third linear regression was performed to examine the relationship between an individual's perspective taking abilities, and their level of political centrism. The relationship between perspective taking and an individual's level of centrism was found to be non-significant as well, $F(1, 96) = .71, p = .40$ ($t = .84, p = .40$).

Finally, a mediation analysis was conducted using the R package lavaan. This type of mediation analysis uses maximum likelihood estimation to compute parameter estimates for all paths simultaneously. Results for this analysis are depicted in Figure 2. No paths were significant.

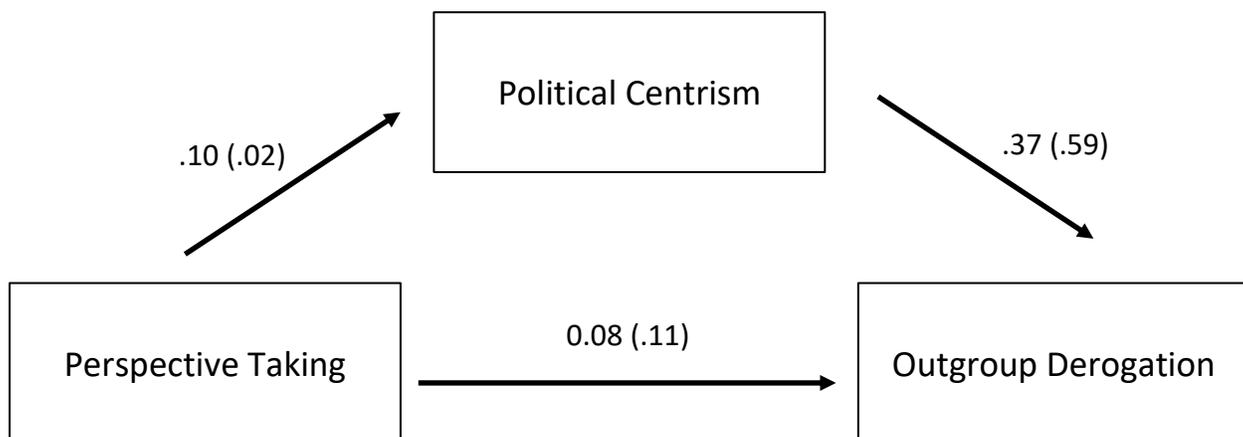


Figure 2. Relationship between perspective taking, political centrism, and outgroup derogation.

Chapter IV: Discussion

In this research it was hypothesized that perspective taking and political centrism would have a positive relationship with each other, and that these variables would each have a negative relationship with outgroup derogation, as well. We also hypothesized that the relationship between perspective taking and outgroup derogation would be partially mediated by political centrism. When tested, however, these relationships were not found among the variables.

Although, previous studies have found a connection between perspective taking and outgroup derogation (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000), as well as centrism and outgroup derogation (Van Prooijen, et al., 2015), the current research did not attain the same results. Additionally, the hypothesized relationship between perspective taking and political centrism was not found. There are multiple possibilities why the current study did not achieve the hypothesized results. Most importantly, due to time and financial constraints we were unable to gather data from a large sample of individuals. Although 128 individuals responded to our survey, only 98 provided us with analyzable data due to item omissions and other data issues. This limited our statistical power to find significant results.

Sampling issues aside, it is important to consider other important factors that may have affected our research. As noted by Iyengar and Westwood (2015), political affiliations are not like racial or class boundaries, we make a conscious decision to join a political party. Because we chose to be a member of our party, as opposed to being born

into it, individuals with the opposite political affiliation may be less understanding or sympathetic of our behaviors and beliefs. It is also noteworthy that partisans are more affectively polarized against one another than many groups previously sampled in perspective taking research, making them more likely to derogate their opposition (Hewstone et al., 2002). Previous research has used relatively neutral groups when examining perspective taking and intergroup relations, for example (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000) relied upon the minimal group paradigm to define an outgroup in their research. Finally, much of the previous research that has found a positive relationship between perspective taking and prosocial behavior required participants to complete some sort of task to prime or enhance perspective taking abilities, for example Wang et al., (2014), required participants to complete an essay of a day in the life of an outgroup member before measuring intergroup contact between outgroups. Our study differed in that it only contained a self-report measure of perspective taking abilities and did not encourage participants to see things from the opposition's point of view before measuring outgroup derogation. It is important not to overlook psychological reactivity and demand characteristics as determinants of the outcome of this research either. It is well established that research subjects tend to alter their behavior when under observation (McCarney et al., 2007), and our hypotheses may have been fairly obvious to the participants, this is most likely to have caused them to answer in ways they thought would confirm our hypotheses (Nichols, Maner, 2008).

Despite the current research failing to find a link between perspective taking abilities, political centrism, and the derogation of one's political opposition, there is a dearth of research demonstrating that perspective taking abilities are related to positive

attitudes and behaviors (Wang et al., 2014, Shih et al., 2009). As well as research suggesting that centrists experience fewer negative emotions than partisans (Van Proijen et al., 2015). Researchers seeking to continue this research would likely benefit from sampling a larger selection of participants due to the likely small effect of the predictor variables and trying to gather a sample that more accurately represents the American electorate. The procedure of soliciting participants through random address and phone number sampling used by the American National Election Survey (ANES) seems to be the gold standard for political research (DeBell, Amsbary, Meldener, Brock & Maisel, 2018), if feasible this or a similar procedure would be ideal as it would gather a more representative sample. Future studies may also want to include a question asking participants to attempt to identify the studies hypotheses, our study hypotheses may have been obvious to participants, leading participants to answer in socially desirable ways.

Appendix I: IRB Approval Letter

**Institutional Review Board**

328 Wells Hall
Murray, KY 42071-3318
270-809-2916 • msu.irb@murraystate.edu

TO: Sean Rife, Psychology

FROM: Jonathan Baskin, IRB Coordinator JB

DATE: 5/1/2019

RE: Human Subjects Protocol I.D. – IRB # 19-146

The IRB has completed its review of your student's Level 1 protocol entitled *Political Centrism, Perspective Taking, and Outgroup Derogation: an Integrated Model*. After review and consideration, the IRB has determined that the research, as described in the protocol form, will be conducted in compliance with Murray State University guidelines for the protection of human participants.

The forms and materials that have been approved for use in this research study are attached to the email containing this letter. These are the forms and materials that must be presented to the subjects. Use of any process or forms other than those approved by the IRB will be considered misconduct in research as stated in the MSU IRB Procedures and Guidelines section 20.3.

Your stated data collection period is from 5/1/2019 to 4/30/2020.

If data collection extends beyond this period, please submit an Amendment to an Approved Protocol form detailing the new data collection period and the reason for the change.

This Level 1 approval is valid until 4/30/2020.

If data collection and analysis extends beyond this date, the research project must be reviewed as a continuation project by the IRB prior to the end of the approval period, 4/30/2020. You must reapply for IRB approval by submitting a Project Update and Closure form (available at murraystate.edu/irb). You must allow ample time for IRB processing and decision prior to your expiration date, or your research must stop until such time that IRB approval is received. If the research project is completed by the end of the approval period, then a Project Update and Closure form must be submitted for IRB review so that your protocol may be closed. It is your responsibility to submit the appropriate paperwork in a timely manner.

The protocol is approved. You may begin data collection now.

*Opportunity
afforded*

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Appendix II: Measures

Demographics

1. How do you describe yourself? (Check one) Male ___ Female ___ Other ___
2. What is your age? ____
3. How would you describe yourself? (Check one) American Indian or Alaska Native ___ Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander ___ Asian or Asian American ___ Black or African American ___ Hispanic or Latino ___ Non-Hispanic White (Caucasian) ___ Other ___

Political affiliation scale

Please indicate where you would fall on a scale of political affiliation.

- Strong Democrat
- Weak Democrat
- Lean Democrat
- Independent
- Lean Republican
- Weak Republican
- Strong Republican

Political Opposition Question

Please indicate the political group that you consider to be your "opposition"

- Liberals
- Conservatives
- Other (Please indicate group in the space provided below)

Political ideology scale

In politics, people sometimes talk about Liberal and Conservative. Where would you place YOURSELF on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 means very Liberal and 10 means very Conservative?

() 0-Very Liberal

() 1

() 2

() 3

() 4

() 5

() 6

() 7

() 8

() 9

() 10-Very Conservative

Perspective Taking Scale

For each item, indicate how well it describes you by choosing the appropriate letter on the scale: A (does not describe me well, B, C, D, or E (describes me well). READ EACH ITEM CAREFULLY BEFORE RESPONDING. Answer as honestly as you can.

1) I sometimes find it difficult to see things from the "other guy's" point of view.

A) Does not describe me well ___ B) ___ C) ___ D) ___ E) Describes me well ___

2) I try to look at everybody's side of a disagreement before I make a decision.

A) Does not describe me well ___ B) ___ C) ___ D) ___ E) Describes me well ___

3) I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.

A) Does not describe me well ___ B) ___ C) ___ D) ___ E) Describes me well ___

4) If I'm sure I'm right about something, I don't waste much time listening to other people's arguments.

A) Does not describe me well ___ B) ___ C) ___ D) ___ E) Describes me well ___

5) I believe that there are two sides to every question and try to look at them both.

A) Does not describe me well ___ B) ___ C) ___ D) ___ E) Describes me well ___

6) When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in his shoes" for a while.

A) Does not describe me well ___ B) ___ C) ___ D) ___ E) Describes me well ___

7) Before criticizing somebody, I try to imagine how I would feel if I were in their place.

A) Does not describe me well ___ B) ___ C) ___ D) ___ E) Describes me well ___

Outgroup Derogation Scale

Please answer the following questions with regards to the political group you affiliate the least with. I.e. If you identify as a conservative/lean conservative, answer these questions with liberals in mind, and vice-versa. Individuals with no political affiliation should apply statements to both parties.

1. Liberals (Conservatives) have too much power in the U.S.

() Strongly agree, () agree, () disagree, () strongly disagree

2. Liberals (Conservatives) are warm and friendly people.

() Strongly agree, () agree, () disagree, () strongly disagree

3. Liberals (Conservatives) are more willing than most to use shady practices to get what they want.
 Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree
4. Liberals (Conservatives) stick together too much.
 Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree
5. Liberals (Conservatives) don't care what happens to anyone but their own kind.
 Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree
6. The more contact a person has with Liberals (Conservatives) the more they get to like them.
 Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree
7. Liberals (Conservatives) are too pushy.
 Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree
8. Do you feel that Liberals (Conservatives) are trying to get ahead at the expense of people like you?
 Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree
9. I try to avoid socializing with Liberals (Conservatives).
 Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree
10. I would not feel comfortable if most of my coworkers were Liberals (Conservatives). Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree
11. I would not mind if my immediate supervisor at work was Liberal (Conservative).
 Strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree

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