

Put yourself in *their* shoes: Empathy and thinking patterns

Fewer social maxims are repeated more than to “put yourself in someone else’s shoes.” This sentiment encourages empathy by prompting one to change their entrenched thinking patterns. Empathy can be thought of as an active attempt to understand another’s perspective or the visceral sensation of identifying with another’s emotions (i.e., cognitive or affective empathy; Davis, 1983). Recently, research has identified a relationship between empathy and self-serving cognitive distortions (Grieve & Panebianco, 2013). Cognitive distortions refer to predictable and inaccurate patterns of thinking. *Self-serving* cognitive distortions are a form of distorted thinking patterns that are steeped in self-centered attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs (Barriga & Gibbs, 1996). Research has also suggested that there is a significant relationship between empathy and sociopolitical ideology (i.e., either socially progressive or conservative; Marsden & Barnett, 2019). The primary goal of this study is to expand upon previous literature and investigate the relationships between all three variables. Participants will complete three questionnaires via an online survey. Those questionnaires include the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1983) and the How I Think Questionnaire (HIT-Q) to measure empathy and thinking patterns, respectively, and demographic questions including political identification. Correlations between the different thinking biases measured by the HIT-Q will be associated with both the IRI and political identification to better understand the relationships between those variables. Ultimately, the results of this study may help to better understand what patterns of thinking are associated with aspects of empathy and political ideology.

Keywords: empathy, cognitive distortions, self-serving biases, sociopolitical ideology