**Importance and Contribution to Science**

Modern explanations of affective polarization such social sorting and identity alignment (Levendusky, 2009; Mason, 2018) do much to clarify universal features of affective polarization. However, current theories do little to explain exactly *who* becomes affectively polarized at the individual-level, or which sorts of individual differences serve as prerequisites to a socially sorted partisan. Without an understanding of the mediating psychological characteristics of affectively polarized partisans, it may be difficult to reduce biases, as individuals’ social choices may leave little room for direct intervention.

We propose an individual difference measure of “cue construal” as an antecedent to social sorting and affective polarization, integrating the psychological “Construal Level Theory” (CLT) (Liberman & Trope, 2008), a spectrum for measuring how concretely or abstractly people perceive concepts. In Converse’s (1964) seminal work on political belief systems, he describes variations in political perceptions like what we would operationalize as an individual difference in construal level, stating that:

“Moving from top to bottom of this information dimension, the character of the objects that are central in a belief system undergoes systematic change. These objects shift from the remote, generic, and abstract to the increasingly simple, concrete, or “close to home.” Where potential political objects are concerned, this progression tends to be from abstract, "ideological" principles to the more obviously recognizable social groupings.”

In a psychological understanding of affective polarization, “concrete” or “closer to home” conceptions of partisan groups as measured by CLT may serve as a precursor to sorted, affectively polarized partisans.

Initial research on construal level in the political context has found evidence that priming concrete rather than abstract images about climate change tended to increase concern about climate change for conservatives, moderates, and liberals alike (Duan, Zwickle, & Takahashi., 2021). This priming of concern through construal level may also extend to attitudes towards identity groups. Yogeeswaran & Dasgupta (2014) found evidence that priming a concrete construal of Hispanic Americans increased prejudicial attitudes towards them, while priming an abstract construal reduced prejudicial attitudes relative to a control. This paradigm may also extend to prejudices towards partisan groups. We suspect that more concrete conceptualizations of partisans may be what provides a clearer target for negative affect towards partisans. In our study, building on prior research, we will attempt to experimentally manipulate the construal level of respondents’ conceptions of political groups to be more abstract via vignettes. This will test this interventions’ impact on affective polarization-reduction as well as downstream consequences such as support for violence towards out-partisans.

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