

Relationships between Extreme Ideology, Integrated Threat, and Outgroup Evaluations

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Background

- During an election, political groups view the opposing party as a threat to their party’s platform, which is associated with negative emotional responses toward the opposition (Stephan et al., 2008).
- Political outgroups represent realistic and symbolic threats to the ingroup (Stephan et al., 2008). Symbolic threat is characterized as a threat to ingroup while realistic threat is characterized as a threat to ingroup resources.
- Individuals with more extreme political ideology tend to be more willing to derogate members of opposing political groups (Chambers et al., 2013; van Prooijn et al. 2015).
- The current work examines differences in the derogation of an outgroup with respect to feelings of intergroup threat and ideological extremity among American Republicans and Democrats.

Method

Participants

- A sample of Republicans (N = 205) and Democrats (N = 211) was recruited using Amazon’s mechanical Turk system.
- The sample was recruited two weeks before the 2016 presidential election.

Measures

Ideological Polarization. 3-item measure assessing how polarized participants’ liberal or conservative beliefs are.

Threat. 5-item scale measuring feelings of threat from the opposing party. (Stephan & Stephan, 2000).

Outgroup Evaluation. 5-item scale measuring participants feelings about the characteristics of members of the opposing party hold (Fiske et al., 2002).

Results

An exploratory analysis suggested that both integrated threat ($\beta = -.28, sr^2 = .07, p < .001$) and ideological extremity ($\beta = -.12, sr^2 = .01, p = .02$) are negatively related to outgroup evaluations, $F(3,383) = 18.85, R^2 = .129, p < .001$.

There was a significant interaction between ideological extremity and integrated threat, $\beta = -.13, sr^2 = .02, p = .005$. For participants who felt more threatened by the outgroup, ideological extremity was negatively related to evaluations of the members of the opposing political party, $\beta = -.25, p < .001$. However, this relationship was not significant for participants who felt less threatened by the opposing political party, $\beta = .01, p = .86$.

Discussion

- This analysis suggests that Republicans and Democrats who are more ideologically extreme tend to also express more negative views regarding members of the opposition party when they feel threatened by that party.
- It also suggests that there may not be a relationship between ideological extremity and evaluations of the opposition party when feelings of threat are low.
- These findings have implications for applied work seeking to reduce the intergroup conflict in American politics.
- Future work should seek to replicate these findings in a confirmatory context.

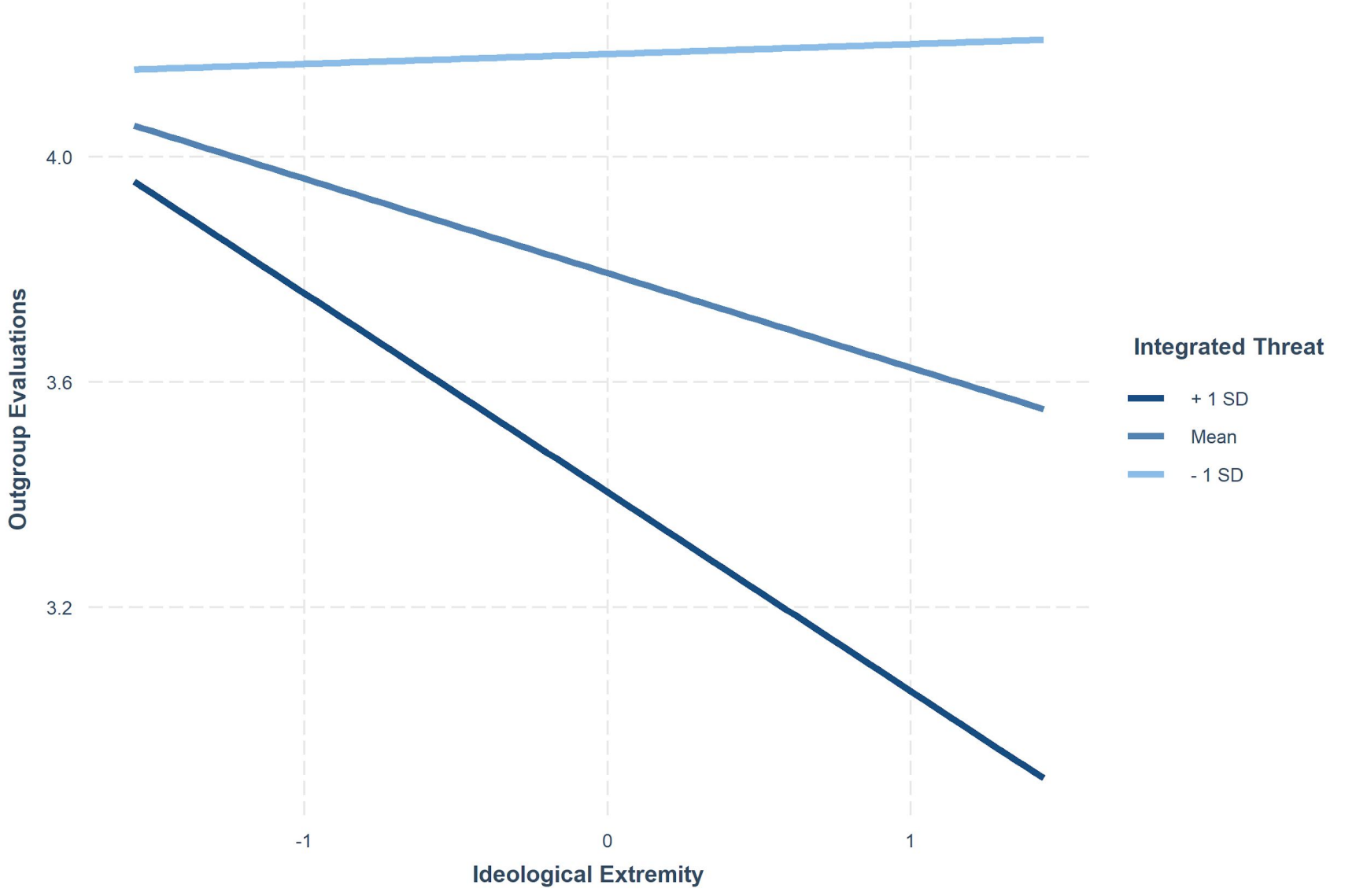
When Republicans and Democrats *feel threatened*, *extreme ideology* predicts *negative evaluations* of opposition party members.

Figure 1
Relationship between Outgroup Evaluations and Ideological Extremity Moderated by Integrated Threat



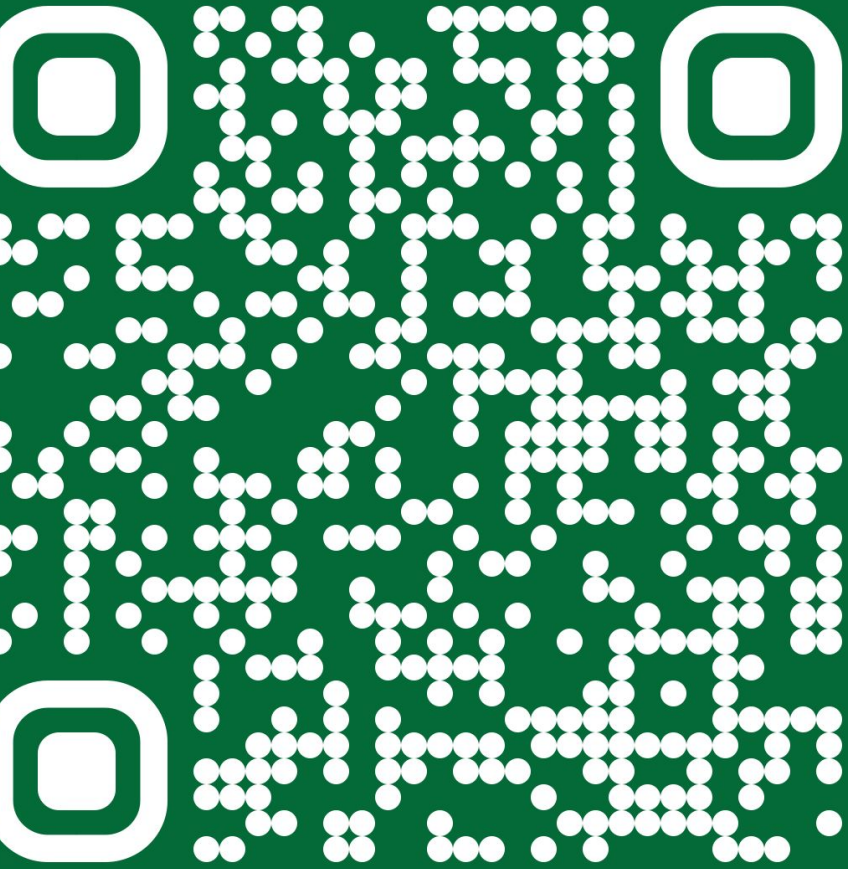
Note. Points are jittered by .1 to increase readability. Point color spectrum indicates score values.

Figure 2
Relationship between Outgroup Evaluations and Ideological Extremity Moderated by Integrated Threat



Note. Y-axis values are truncated to facilitate interpretation.

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Tables and Figures

Table 1
Full Regression Model Predicting Outgroup Evaluations

Predictor	b	β	sr^2	95% CI	t	p	Fit
(Intercept)	3.79**						
Ideological Extremity	-0.17*	-0.12	0.01	[-.01, .03]	2.33	0.02	
Integrated Threat	-0.40***	-0.28	0.07	[.02, .12]	5.83	< .001	
Ideological Extremity x Integrated Threat	-0.19**	-0.13	0.02	[-.01, .04]	2.82	0.005	
$R^2 = .129^{***}$							

Note. A significant b-weight indicates the semi-partial correlation is also significant. b represents unstandardized regression weights. sr^2 represents the semi-partial correlation squared. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$ *** indicates $p < .001$

Table 2
Simple Slopes Analysis of the Interaction between Integrated Threat and Ideological Extremity

	b	β	SE	95% CI	t	p
Integrated Threat						
-1 SD	0.02	0.01	0.1	[-0.18, 0.22]	0.18	0.86
M	-0.17*	-0.12	0.07	[-0.31, -0.03]	2.33	0.02
1 SD	-0.35***	-0.25	0.09	[-0.54, -0.16]	3.77	< .001

Note. b represents unstandardized regression weights. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$ *** indicates $p < .001$.

Table 3
Means, standard deviations, and correlations with confidence intervals

Variable	1	2	M	SD
1. Intergroup Threat			5.3	0.97
2. Ideology	.35** [.26, .43]		1.56	0.97
3. Outgroup Evaluation	-.31** [-.40, -.22]	-.22** [-.32, -.13]	3.73	1.37

Note. M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively. Values in square brackets indicate the 95% confidence interval for each correlation. * indicates $p < .05$. ** indicates $p < .01$.

Figure 3
Scales for Outgroup Evaluation, Ideology, and Integrated Threat

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
In general, most Republicans [Democrats] are warm.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In general, most Republicans [Democrats] are likable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In general, most Republicans [Democrats] are competent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In general, most Republicans [Democrats] are intelligent.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In general, most Republicans [Democrats] are effective.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Very Liberal	Liberal	Somewhat Liberal	Neither Liberal nor Conservative	Somewhat Conservative	Conservative	Very Conservative
In general, how liberal or conservative are you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In general, how fiscally liberal or conservative are you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
In general, how socially liberal or conservative are you?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Agree	Strongly agree
Republicans and Democrats have very different values.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Republicans and Democrats have conflicting values	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Republicans [Democrats] want to push their legislative agenda at the cost of what is good for America	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Republicans [Democrats] dominate American politics	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Republicans [Democrats] promote policy that hurts hard working Americans	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Figure 4
Demographics

