Parties as Superordinate Categories and Their Functions in Sociopsychological Adaptation to Political Conflict

Max Magaña

April 15, 2026

Abstract

In two-party systems, each of the two dominant parties emerges as a broad, cross-cutting umbrella pressured to differentiate itself and align and coordinate heterogenous social groups to be politically viable. I argue parties solve these problems by converging on narratives that reflect subgroup hierarchy orientation and portray subgroups as victims of discrimination and their opponents as culprits. The narratives generate priors through societal beliefs that structure individual perception, yielding stable coalitions and contributing to polarization. Moreover, I argue, hierarchy orientation also shapes the psychological structure of partisan identification. Partisanship is a superordinate social identity whose structure varies according to party organizational culture. The Democratic Party, which views itself as a vehicle for inclusion and has a decentralized power structure, allows for dual recategorization and permits identifiers to retain subgroup identities under the more inclusive partisan identity. In contrast, the Republican Party, which is more socially homogenous, discourages individuality, and promotes deference to authority, emphasizes single recategorization–uniting subgroups by emphasizing partisanship exclusively.

Keywords: political parties, partisanship, party identification, superordinate identity, social identity, discrimination, narratives, intergroup emotions, echo chambers, sociopsychological infrastructure, schema, group status, polarization, sorting, social dominance, hierarchy

Independent Researcher, Terra Bella, CA, USA
Email: maxmaganacarranza@gmail.com

Introduction

Political conflict in America is rife with perceptual disputes among a diverse population. Throughout American history, there are clear political divisions among the most "natural" or basic identities (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation, religion) playing out over decades (e.g., Lipset and Rokkan 1967, King and Smith 2005). More recently, since the 1960s, support for affirmative action has been debated along racial lines in the public and ideologically across Supreme Courts; women and men have been debating gender inequalities on Democratic- and Republican- leaning news stations, respectively; religious "nones" grow larger across the country while religious groups–especially Evangelical Protestants–persist on expanding religious influence on government; acceptance of homosexuality in the public has grown yet there are also influential legal advances in socially conservative directions. Given such complex conflict, how do parties unite various groups that each have their own set of needs–some of which are competing (e.g., working-class Whites and business interests in the right; LGBTQ+ and racial/ethnic groups that tend to be socially conservative, such as Latinos, on the left), including group-specific esteem enhancement and competing perceptions of discrimination?

I argue that part of the answer lies in who parties portray as victims and as culprits of discrimination. Perceptions of discrimination have, over recent decades, increasingly become a prominent issue among dominant (i.e., men, Christians, Whites, heterosexuals) and subordinate (women, non-Christians, non-Whites, LGBTQ+) groups. Disputes over discrimination entail disagreement over what is legitimate and whether an action or policy affects a group. For example, Solomon and Martin (2019) argue that the movement-countermovement dynamics observable between Black Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter are explainable through the collective victimhood framework, which refers to the tendency for ingroup members to perceive the ingroup as relatively disadvantaged to an outgroup in conflict through narrative (Young and Sullivan 2016). One side argues they experience systemic discrimination from the other side while the latter argues they are unfairly targeted for upholding law and order by the former. The movements are housed in the Democratic Party and Republican Party, respectively, and I suggest their narratives have been extrapolated by coalition members (see Smith and King 2024).

A facet that makes these conflicts challenging is that “groups have specific and different identity-based needs that must be met to approach reconciliation” (Solomon and Martin 2019; p. 10). As commentator Sawchuk (2021) observed, “Critics [on the political right] charge that [Critical Race Theory, CRT] leads to negative dynamics, such as a focus on group identity over universal, shared traits; divides people into `oppressed’ and `oppressor’ groups; and urges intolerance.” In contrast, proponents of CRT support a critical re-examination of America as that population expresses grievance over historical patterns whose influence they perceive in the current iteration of the American political system. Indeed, while such extremity in emotion is not representative of their respective populations, the Pew Research Center (2021) reported *Deep Divisions in Americans’ Views of Nation’s Racial History – and How to Address It*. Among one of the Pew's (2021) findings are “wide racial, partisan gaps on whether more attention to the history of racism in the U.S. is good for society.” Hence, voices in the Democratic Party portray dominant groups as the culprits of discrimination and subordinate groups as the victims; in contrast, the Republican Party portrays dominant groups as the victims and subordinate groups as culprits.

This project elaborates on this thesis, arguing victimhood and hierarchy orientation: pressure heterogenous party elites and partisans to unite under a cross-cutting common front to coordinate political interests, influence the psychological structure of partisanship, and function as the bases from which coherent narratives emerge that allow partisans to fulfill psychological needs in intractable conflict. Recent literature (e.g., Abramowitz 2018, Mason 2018, O'Brian 2024, Smith and King 2024) indicates ideological and affective polarization emanate from social identities, with race as especially divisive. I contribute to this scholarship by submitting the argument that hierarchy orientation (i.e., hierarchy-attenuation or hierarchy-enhancement; Pratto et al 1994, Sidanius and Pratto 1999, Pratto et al 2006) is a key psychological factor shared by the public and elites that facilitates sorting and contributes to polarization. In doing so, I build on O'Brian (2024) by arguing sorting and polarization are endogenous processes in which groups have hierarchy orientations that party elites appeal to.

The two-party system creates conditions for path-dependency in party sorting based on hierarchy orientation. Group-based hierarchies of power and status develop across societies, and individuals interact with hierarchy in either enhancing or attenuating orientations (Pratto et al 1999). Additionally, groups tend to exhibit a hierarchy orientation consistent with group status (Pratto et al 1999). That is, how individuals locate themselves in a stratified polity has implications for their political preferences and behavior, with individuals advancing group interests (Berry et al 2020) to maintain or improve group position (e.g., McDaniel 2013). Parties experience pressure to differentiate themselves to be viable competitors (Downs 1957), but the electoral rules of a two-party system constrain the two dominant parties, which emerge as broad cross-cutting umbrellas, to differentiate themselves as either hierarchy-attenuating or hierarchy-enhancing. Parties have differentiated on race throughout American history, with opposing racial institutional orders switching allegiances in different eras (King and Smith 2005). When a party adopts a consistent liberal or conservative position on race, it signals to voters a hierarchy orientation on an especially divisive cleavage that creates path dependency in sorting (O'Brian 2004): racial conservatives, which tend to be socially conservative in general, sort into the hierarchy-enhancing party (O'Brian 2024); the liberal party experiences pressure to appeal to non-Whites, liberals, and other minority groups that tend to be hierarchy-attenuating (Abramowitz 2018). Consequently, hierarchy orientation in a two-party system leads to party "mega-identities" in which heterogenous social identities and their cleavages become increasingly associated with parties (Mason 2018).

Moreover, hierarchy orientation contributes to the theoretical understanding of partisanship. It influences how groups and parties adapt to political life: hierarchy orientation shapes the psychological structure of partisan identification and societal beliefs in narratives that identifiers and elites develop to manage psychological needs in intractable conflicts. The dominant approach to partisanship conceptualizes partisanship as an enduring identity but rejects social identity theory (SIT; Green et al 2002). However, conceptualizing partisanship as a social identity clarifies the role cross-pressures play in partisan identification (Mason 2018). Evidence shows subordinate groups prefer decentralized power structures (e.g., Smith and King 2024, Klinkner 1994) and their social identities tend to dominate over their political identities in appraising political phenomena (e.g., Boyer et al 2022, Klinkner 1994). Thus, I propose that the Democratic partisan identity allows for dual recategorization, which permits individuals to retain

subgroup identities under a more inclusive superordinate identity (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000). In contrast, dominant groups emphasize deference to authority (e.g. Klinkner 1994) and their political identities dominate over their social identities in such appraisals (e.g., Boyer et al 2022, Klinkner 1994). Thus, I propose that the Republican partisan identity emphasizes single recategorization, which emphasizes the superordinate identity exclusively (Moss 2017).

In managing the psychological costs of conflict and coordinating diverse interests in partisan coalitions, hierarchy orientation provides the cross-cutting front from which meaningful narratives emerge to address fundamental questions: are you repairing the system or are you protecting it, who are the culprits of our problems, and what are means to our ends? Narratives function as simplified representations of information (e.g., about an event or group in the environment) that individuals recall for themselves and others to render "judgments or behavioral decisions" (Wyer et al 2002, p. 131). Through hierarchy orientation, heterogenous partisans are able to develop narratives that include agreeable histories, collective emotional orientations to conflict, and futures they can collaborate towards. Thus, partisan narratives emerge as compressed representations of shared experiences among coalition members that orient them in conflict.

This project is divided into three sections. In the first section, titled *The Psychology of Discrimination*, I organize discussion on antecedents of *perception of pervasiveness of discrimination* and its political consequences by building on the literature review framework outlined by Major and Dover (2016). I suggest these perceptions provide the bases for societal beliefs that comprise narratives, and provide insights into the content of societal beliefs by linking Bar-Tal's (2007) framework on sociopsychological adaptation to intractable conflict to literature on the antecedents of perception of discrimination. In contrast to Major and Dover's (2016) review, which is written for a social psychology audience and focuses on attributions to discrimination (i.e., using discrimination to explain an event), I write to a political science audience and focus on perceived pervasiveness of discrimination. Perceived pervasiveness of discrimination reflects a sense of stable, systemic unjust treatment against a group that is likely to reflect a stable sense of prejudice (Branscombe et al 1999, p. 136). Hence, perception of pervasiveness of discrimination is logically linked to constructs in political science such as group consciousness, linked fate, and stereotypes and stigma, which have important consequences on political attitudes and behavior.

In the second section, *The American Power Structure and the Sociopsychological Significance of Group Position*, I contextualize perceptions of discrimination against the backdrop of American inequality. Inequality creates varying chronic conditions that influence how groups enhance esteem and perceive status threats, including discrimination. I develop an overview of American racial hierarchy (King and Smith 2024, Berry et al 2020), discuss racial realignment and party coalition formation (Green et al 2004, Mason 2018, Abramowitz 2018, O'Brian 2024), and introduce Social Dominance Theory (Pratto et al 1999) to study partisan narratives.

In the third section, *Parties as Superordinate Categories and Conductors of Narratives*, I argue for the conceptualization of parties as superordinate identities and explain how narratives emerge from hierarchy orientation. I begin the section by arguing that Otten's (2002) dual

process model of ingroup distinctiveness can be combined with party schemas (Zhirkov and Valentino 2022) to explain affective polarization at the cognitive level. Moreover, this combination provides insights into the emergence of motivated reasoning. I maintain the dual process model can be combined with the construct of superordinate identity to explain how positive ingroup bias may favor ingroups over outgroups in partisan coalitions, providing insights on the primacy of partisanship relative to other social identities. I review literature on party organizational culture (Klinkner 1994) implying the Democratic Party favors dual categorization whereas the Republican Party favors single recategorization. I apply Bar-Tal's (2007) framework on sociopsychological adaptation to intractable conflicts to theorize how narratives that manage needs emerge in prolonged mass conflict. Lastly, I review literature on narratives (Smith and King 2024, Hochschild 2016, Cramer 2016, Frank 2014) on the political left and right that offers evidence on how narratives align partisans and manage conflict.

The Psychology of Discrimination

This project focuses on *perceptions of pervasiveness of discrimination,* though it interchangeably refers to them as perceptions of discrimination. Perceived pervasiveness of discrimination reflects a sense of stable, systemic unjust treatment against a group that is likely to reflect a stable sense of prejudice (Branscombe et al 1999, p. 136). I suggest these perceptions provide the bases for societal beliefs that comprise narratives, because societal beliefs refer to cognitions shared by society members on issues that are especially concerning for their society (Bar-Tal 2007, p. 1435). In doing so, I link literature on the psychology of discrimination to Bar-Tal's (2007) conceptual framework on sociopsychological adaptation to intractable conflict, which I elaborate on in a subsequent section. Societal beliefs can describe the characteristics, structures, and processes related to conflict–they "constitute the perceived common element in the reality of society members" (Bar-Tal 2007, p. 1437). Societal beliefs related to conflict tend to be widespread by the majority of society members at the peak of conflict (Bar-Tal 2007). In this section, I review antecedents of perception of discrimination, such as prototypes and chronic affect, that are likely key to understanding how groups develop societal beliefs that comprise narratives.

Generally, though scholars do not dispute discrimination implies category-based treatment, some question illegitimacy as a necessary condition of discrimination as opposed to a facet (Major and Dover 2016). While evidence indicates individuals tend to attribute discrimination when they perceive illegitimate category-based treatment, experimental studies reveal subordinate groups tend to not view other subordinate groups as perpetrators of discrimination (Major and Dover 2016). Moreover, prevalence of perceptions of discrimination vary by group status, such that perceptions of pervasive discrimination and perceived personal discrimination are more prevalent among subordinate groups than dominant groups (Major et al 2002, Schmitt and Branscombe 2002). Indeed, while the majority of prior work finds dominant groups tend to not perceive discrimination and not perceive it as chronic and widespread, there is recent evidence suggesting that the perceptual landscape is changing (see Berry et al 2020 for discussion on growing white group consciousness). Lastly, some social categories (i.e, stigmatized groups construable as reflecting agency rather than acquired attributes, such as obese) are prone to not perceive intentional and harmful category-based treatment as illegitimate,

highlighting the role that chronic beliefs (i.e., internalization of stigma) and context (i.e., culture, prevalence of stigma) play in mediating perceptions of discrimination (Major and Dover 2016).

Reflecting the importance of intent in discrimination, economists have differentiated statistical discrimination (Phelps 1972, Arrow 1973) from taste-based discrimination (Becker 1957; see Onuchic 2025 for a literature review on recent theories). Statistical discrimination describes category-based treatment based on statistical inference whereas taste-based discrimination describes discrimination based on "traditional" prejudice or preference against specific groups (Lang and Spitzer 2020; Eyting 2022). On taste-based prejudice, the economic perspective observes that individuals experience disutility from interacting with unsavory groups (Eyting 2022); in contrast, statistical discrimination emerges from decisions made with imperfect information (Onuchic 2025). Specifically, statistical discrimination differs in that it emerges from Bayesian rationalism (Lang and Spitzer 2020)–it views social identity "as a payoff-irrelevant trait" (Onuchic 2025, p. 1). Hence, statistical discrimination assumes "that there are either differences in group-level statistics between individuals of two groups or differences in beliefs about group-level statistics" (Eyting 2022, p. 3). Statistical discrimination may be valid or invalid, where the latter case may emerge from inaccurate beliefs (Bohren et al 2022) such as valid inferences based on non-representative samples (Lang and Spitzer 2020).

While Eyting (2022) observes taste-based discrimination can be mitigated through intergroup contact and inaccurate statistical discrimination can be attenuated through corrective information, I note the importance of *positive* interactions in reducing bias (Allport 1954, Pettigrew and Tropp 2011). For example, Lang and Spitzer (2020) reference police using statistical learning versus taste-based discrimination on duty, suggesting that, as Bayesian rationalists, they develop experience-based stereotypes used to minimize information processing in rational goal-seeking. Presumably, interactions tend to be negatively skewed in this context. While statistical discrimination may be benign in intent, such that it is only intended to maximize individual utility and not intentionally cause harm to an individual or group, it can lead to inequality as an externality (Lang and Spitzer 2020). Lastly, structures such as institutions (e.g., see Goel et al 2017 for addressing bias in police practices) and algorithms (see Onuchic 2025 for a review) can also be attributed as sources of discrimination.

Exogenous Factors

To better explain perceptions of pervasiveness of discrimination, I define *attribution to discrimination* because these perceptions provide insights into illegitimate behaviors perceived as occurring on a systemic scale. Attribution to discrimination refers to using discrimination to explain perceived unjust group-based behavior, whether divulged or not (Major and Dover 2016). Following Major and Dover (2016), I categorize predictors of attributions to discrimination into exogenous and endogenous factors. Exogenous factors include characteristics of the event, including prototypes and situational cues. Prototypes are "mental" or cognitive models used to determine if discrimination has occurred (Harris et al 2004), functioning as heuristics. Prototypes help individuals explain and understand specific classes of events by outlining their conditions. Prototypes delineate exemplars individuals compare against consciously or subconsciously to determine if information perceived matches conditions to determine if the prototypical event occurred (Harris et al 2004). Prototypes lighten information

processing costs and increase the likelihood individuals will render desirable evaluations and decisions (i.e., according to their own preferences) towards ends.

Discrimination is prototyped as an intergroup phenomenon (Inman and Baron 1996; Rodin et al 1990): individuals are more likely to perceive discrimination from an outgroup than ingroup (Dover et al 2014; Major et al 2002). Discrimination prototypes generally reflect status-asymmetry (Major et al 2002), such that high-status groups are prototyped as perpetrators, but status is context-dependent: the same individuals from dominant and subordinate groups implicated in one perceptual dispute may experience another perceptual dispute given different status asymmetry (Major et al 2002; Rivest et al 2017). Lastly, discrimination is prototyped as intentional and harmful (Swim et al 2003).

While Major and Dover (2016) categorize culture and norms under exogenous factors, I suggest they are better categorized under group membership. I maintain accessibility to intellectual and, or, emotional components of culture, such as prototypes, ideology, common experiences and shared narratives (Dawson 1995; Cramer 2016; Hochschild 2016), or other group-relevant information (Maitner et al 2010) are strongly related to group membership. Indeed, culture and norms are exogenous to individuals in that they exist in stable forms over time, transmitted from individual to individual, across generations, and individuals can access culture impersonally without group membership–more today than at any other point in history (e.g., see Graham 2016 for study of mass communication and public opinion). However, the intersubjective space (Gillespie and Cornish 2010) conveyed by culture is not as accessible to the uninitiated (Hochschild 2016 suggests that "deep stories" through which individuals and groups understand themselves can be deciphered). Full and rich accessibility of narratives (Hermans 1996) is affected by chronic experiences and primed beliefs such as group membership and group identification (Dawson 1995; Major and Dover 2016; though see Cramer 2016 and Hochschild 2016). Thus, distributions of culture and norms vary by social category, such as nationality, religion, and gender, with each group cultivating "cultural pools" of norms, values, and opinions (Lipset and Rokkan 1967; for discussion on group living and the emergence of language, see MacNeilage and Davis 2005)–or paradigms (Kuhn 1962).

Despite that groups tend to not mix (e.g. Putnam and Cambell 2010; Dawson 1995; Kuhn 1962), the less concrete nature of ideas enables them to extend beyond their origins and renders them modifiable by other hosts (i.e., rendered more palatable; e.g, see Graham 2016 for study on "inter-ideological mingling;" see Kuhn 1962 for discussion on how constructs are shared and adapted across sciences). While there are idiosyncratic dimensions to ideas, such as personal beliefs or attitudes reflecting invalid statistical inference (Lang and Spitzer 2020), ideas are not exclusive to individuals. Individuals can inductively or deductively replicate ideas–such activities allow practitioners in philosophical paradigms to select against ideas they cannot verify through scrutiny, with standards of rigor set by community practitioners (Kuhn 1962). Similarly, the empirical nature of a subset of ideas is subjected to falsifiability by scientific practitioners.

Moreover, even if statistically invalid, ideas can be shared through common narratives, reflecting common experience, such as prejudice stemming from perceived group threat (Graham 2016) or positive ingroup differentiation (Knippenberg and Ellemers 1990). Research shows that priors, such as group identification and group-relevant beliefs and attitudes, chronically bias

information selection and processing (Taber and Lodge 2006; Lodge and Taber 2013). Thus, I suggest these common pools emerge into intersubjective space through common experience biased by cognitive or affective dissonance (Mills 1959; Kuhn 1962). Indeed, scholars observe that prejudice and discrimination are pervasive phenomena across time and culture (Pratto et al 2006). Narratives in intersubjective space help group members manage information about the environment and orient their preferences (Kuhn 1962; Hermans 1996; Dawson 1995; Cramer 2016; Hochschild 2016; Graham 2016).

Endogenous Factors

Because perception of discrimination involves illegitimate group-based behavior and because social identities are chronically primed and bias information processing, I allocate more attention to group identification over other factors. Race, Ethnicity, and Politics (REP) scholars have demonstrated that perceptions of discrimination influence White, Black, Asian, and Latino political behavior (see Berry et al 2020 for a review). Moreover, political scientists at large have found partisanship as one of the strongest and most enduring factors shaping political attitudes and behavior, conceptualizing it as a psychological or affective attachment to a party. Its attachment affects perception akin to a "lens" which filters out incongruous information (Campbell et al 1960; though see Lazarsfeld et al 1968). Taber and Lodge (Taber and Lodge 2006; Lodge and Taber 2013) developed a model of affect-driven motivated reasoning that explains differences in public opinion between partisans at the cognitive level consistent with the canonical "lens" concept (Campbell et al 1960).

Partisanship chronically affects cognition through affective and cognitive biases that motivate selection and processing of information towards consistency with prior beliefs and attitudes. These biases maintain cognitive consistency (Nasr 2021) and decrease information processing. The motivated reasoning model describes and explains biases in information processing using affectively-charged prior beliefs, confirmation bias, and disconfirmation bias (Strickland et al 2011). Strickland, Taber, and Lodge (2011) explain that all political reasoning is influenced by accuracy or partisan goals. Of interest, partisan goals refer to the motivation for partisans to selectively process information upholding prior beliefs and partisan attachments (Taber and Lodge 2006). Partisanship influences can render biased evaluations of claims from outgroups and even neutral sources of information.

Like literature on perceptions of discrimination in ambiguous contexts among different social groups, literature on partisan identification also suggests identification biases evaluation of ambiguous information. Building on the construct of "hot cognitions" in motivated reasoning, Nasr (2021) demonstrates assimilation and distancing effects among voters who perceive ambiguous positions from parties. "Hot cognitions" refer to cognitions associated with evaluated political objects tagged with affect, stored in memory as a "running tally" for future recall to reduce information processing costs (Taber and Lodge 2006). Given uncertainty on party policy positions, or ambiguity–a tactic parties employ to approximate the median voter (Downs 1957), Nasr (2021) argues voters estimate party positions based on prior affect towards the party. Essentially, voters estimate the party they like occupies a likable policy space whereas the party they dislike occupies a dislikable policy space. Nasr (2021) experimentally demonstrates the robustness of these perceptions to disambiguation of party positions. This argument resonates

with Iyengar and colleagues' (2012), who explain affective polarization among partisans through social distance–the perceived difference between an ingroup and outgroup in some dimension. Iyengar and colleagues (2012) suggest individuals perceive wide gaps between ingroups and outgroups.

Social Identity Theory and Affect

To suggest the prevalence of motivated reasoning based on prior beliefs and attitudes, I turn to Social Identity Theory (SIT), which political scientists commonly apply to study discrimination (Berry et al 2020). Social categories are readily created or activated psychologically, acting as a set of strong preferences that bias individuals toward the ingroup in intergroup situations (Tajfel 1970, Tajfel et al 1971, Tajfel and Turner 1979; Diehl 1990). Tajfel's (1970, 1971) Minimal Group Paradigm experiments revealed that individuals divided by even the most arbitrary reasons exhibited ingroup bias in sharing with ingroup and outgroup members. Once a category and ingroup bias are established, various consistent socio-psychological processes ensue (Knippenberg and Ellemers 1990). Hence, "It would … not be surprising to find that strongly held group identities and related attitudes elicit motivated reasoning in response to threatening information that aligns one's group, places an outgroup in an overly favorable light, or some motivation of the two" (Feldman and Huddy 2018, p. 173).

Building on the importance of chronic affect in shaping perceptions of discrimination (Major and Dover 2016), I focus on chronic group-based affect. Political scientists have found that group-based emotions strongly influence information gathering, processing, political attitudes, and political behavior (e.g., Albertson and Gadarian 2015, Banks and Valentino 2012). In the context of social identity, to briefly explain the emotional aspects of group identification in a manner consistent with the "lens" metaphor, I summarize Intergroup Emotions Theory (IET) from social psychology. Mackie and colleagues (Mackie et al 2000; Mackie et al 2008; Maitner et al 2010) and other fundamental contributors to IET explicate the appraisal process involved in producing emotional responses to information relating to ingroups and outgroups. In brief, IET explains the process structuring emotional outcomes relating to outgroups begins with self-categorization, which influences subsequent appraisal of the environment and its implications. Self-categorization refers to incorporation of a social category into an individual identity, or sense of self. This means norms, culture, and other information from the group is incorporated into the self such that the self or affect is invested in the group. When this occurs, the individual well-being depends on perceptions of the group, such as its social, economic, or political status.

Appraisal refers to the interpretation of subjects (e.g., other groups, policies, and institutions, history) in terms of implications on the ingroup (Mackie et al 2008; Smith, 1993). Individuals ask: is this good, bad, or irrelevant for my group's status (physical, sociopolitical status, economic)? Appraisal leads to consonant affective reactions (Smith 1993), but there are perceptual conditions that mitigate emotional experiences. For example, individuals must perceive manageability of a group threat to experience anger rather than anxiety (Albertson and Gadarian 2015). Moreover, in political science, Banks and Valentino (2012) find that whites respond with anger to redistributive policies based on race, where anger is a moral emotion that "energizes" individuals to seek restitution or punitive action. Students of campaigns recognize

the powerful effect of emotions on mass attitudes and opinions, and practitioners in campaigns intentionally evoke specific emotions (Banks and Bell 2013). In short, political elites can engender strong, motivating emotions among their publics (Matsumoto et al 2015).

Group Consciousness

In political science, politicization of social identities is explained through linked fate and group consciousness. "Collective identity [i.e., an identity shared by group members] becomes politically relevant when people who share a specific identity take part in political action on behalf of that collective" (Klandermans 2014, p. 2). A prominent factor behind collective action is linked fate, which refers to the belief that ingroup member's fates are linked by their group's collective outcomes and group consciousness refers to belief in marginalization leading to disposition for collective action (see Berry et al 2020 for a review). Discrimination cultivates group consciousness (Barreto and Pedraza 2009; Schildkraut 2010; Yoo and Lee 2008; Lee 2013; Lee 2008), but elite ingroup members (i.e., public opinion leaders, politicians) may need to clarify group threats for comembers (Lee 2008; Zepeda-Millan 2017) or mobilize (Cepuran and Berry 2022; Barreto 2010; Lee 2008) their nonelectoral or electoral activism. Perceived discrimination can increase support for descriptive representation (Schildkraut 2005; Tate 1994) and increase Democratic affiliation among racial minorities (Dawson 1995) and Republican affiliation in whites (Jardina 2019). Group consciousness can be activated by, for example, stereotypes, personal experiences with discrimination, xenophobic campaign rhetoric, and policies threatening to the ingroup. In short, Berry and colleagues (2020) observe these findings indicate "individual perceptions of discrimination can catalyze senses of shared subordinate status, which can enable group-oriented collective action" (p. 3-4), maintaining that relative group position is a necessary but insufficient precondition for linked fate and group consciousness.

The American Power Structure and Sociopsychological Significance of Group Position

Observing inequality between social groups clarifies perceptual disputes over discrimination that influence intergroup relations and vice versa. Inequality highlights that groups have different needs and interests–inequality creates diverging chronic situational factors group members must navigate. Each social category has its own history and obstacles that chronically influence how identifiers engage in positive intra- and inter- group differentiation. When individuals identify with a social category, they internalize its group position–or "clout" (Wilkinson 2015)–and that motivates subsequent affect and cognitions. Building on Tajfel and Turner (1979), it follows that group members will strive to achieve or maintain positive social identity given inequality. For example, Blumer (1958) argues prejudice is a function of relative position that reinforces perceived inequality among beneficiary groups. Similarly, in three studies–two involving cross-national data, Napier and Jost (2008) find that conservatism offers "an ideological buffer against the negative hedonic effects of economic inequality" (p. 565) because it rationalizes inequality, which is essential to conservatism (Jost 2019). Hence, group members that benefit from hierarchy are motivated to maintain or bolster it and perceive it in a palatable manner (Napier and Jost 2008; for a discussion of similar behavior among practitioners in scientific paradigms and scientific revolutions, see Kuhn 1962).

Following Blumer (1958), observing historical variation between groups, and research on intergroup emotions, I suggest group position mediates the kinds of emotions group members experience in a stratified polity. Whites, because of their historical relatively advantaged position, on average experience hegemonic anxiety due to hegemonic threats or suspicion thereof (Blumer 1958). In an information experiment exposing white participants high in group identification to projected statistics about demographic changes, Major and colleagues (2016) found loss of population dominance increased anti-immigration policy preference and support for Donald Trump, who appealed to white racial fears, in the 2016 presidential election. Moreover, the increase in preference for Trump was comparable across partisans high in ethnic strength. Similarly, using observational data, Garand and colleagues (2016) found individuals high in American identity identification perceived greater threat from immigrants than those low in identification strength. Indeed, research shows Whites still experience stigma, subordination, or relative deprivation in certain contexts, but because of their historical dominance over other groups, their ingroup is represented at large in various domains or aspects of society (e.g. Wilkinson 2015; Rivest et al 2017). In contrast, subordinate racial groups experience a sense of shared overall subordinate status and deprivation relative to Whites and pressure to assimilate (e.g., see Wilkinson 2015; Chong and Kim 2006; Dawson 1995).

Thus, the power context clarifies phenomena such as "reverse discrimination," which refers to category-based treatment rendering dominant groups contextually disadvantaged. Subordinate groups tend to perceive it as legitimate because such actions could be construed as means to rectify perceived inequities (Dawson 1995; Berry et al 2020; Schildkraut 2005). On the other hand, dominant groups perceive it as illegitimate because they do not perceive such inequities or prioritize them (Cramer 2016; Hochschild 2016; Jardina 2019, Smith and King 2018). Lastly, the power context allows us to understand group interests as dynamic, as McDaniel (2013) observes changes in group status correspond to changes in both political meaning and interests: "those in the dominant status address politics from the viewpoint of benefits, while those in the subordinate status have the viewpoint of lessing costs" (p. 93). Hence, what is perceived as discrimination is likely to vary with group position.

Since the United States' origins, a subset of social groups (i.e., European descendants–collectively, "White," men, Christians, and wealthier individuals) have maintained hegemony over subordinate groups (Native Americans, African Americans, Latino Americans, Asian Americans, women, religious minorities [non-Protestants, but especially non-Christians], and other subordinate categories that became salient over time [e.g., sexual minorities]) in politics and culture. In studying the systems of racial hierarchy in place since the country's inception, King and Smith (2005) developed a "racial orders framework" which argues there have been two evolving "racial institutional orders" throughout American history, with one advocating for White supremacist interests and its competitor advocating for "transformative egalitarian" interests. King and Smith (2005) define racial institutional orders as coalitions which have integrated racial concepts and interests to unify state institutions, political actors, and civil society organizations "to secure and exercise governing power in demographically, economically, and ideologically structured contexts that define the range of opportunities open to political actors" (p. 75). The two institutional orders have adapted by taking opposing positions on dominant racial issues throughout different eras. White supremacist racial orders have created economic, power, and status inequalities in benefitting ingroups whereas egalitarian racial orders

have sought to redress these conditions. Building on this framework, Smith and King (2024) more recently observe that two major, polarized alliances have developed along party lines, with the alliance on the Republican side seeking to "protect" the traditional power structure whereas its Democratic counterpart seeks to "repair" the power structure's systemic racism and other inequalities (e.g., gender, sexual identity).

Unsurprisingly, most scholars do not dispute Blacks experience the most discrimination, followed by Latinos, Asians, and Whites despite varying operationalizations of inequality (see Berry et al 2020; Chong and Kim 2006; Masuoka and Junn 2013; Sanchez and Vargas 2016). Berry and colleagues (2020) find that the public accurately perceives the American racial hierarchy described by scholars, with the public perceiving Whites located above all, followed by Asians, Latinos, and African Americans at the bottom. Indeed, the stability of this power structure has been such that, today, the public widely recognizes these groups as traditionally privileged or dominant and disadvantaged or subordinate, respectively.

I argue the demographic composition of the current party system reflects a subordinate-dominant division, with the Republican Party associated with dominant racial, religious, and sexual orientation interests whereas the Democratic Party is associated with subordinate counterparts (Smith and King 2024, Green et al 2004, Mason 2018, O'Brian 2024, Abramowitz 2018, Zhirkov and Valentino 2022). Race remains an enduring, divisive factor in American politics such that scholars converge on it as contributing to party realignment or party coalition formation (e.g., Abramowitz 2018, O'Brian 2024). Additionally, scholars observe the public is divided on "cultural" issues, such as LGBTQ+ rights, reproductive rights, and the role of religion in government, with divisions playing out across party lines. While some scholars (e.g. Abramowitz 2018), emphasize ideology and policy preferences as factors driving sorting and polarization, Mason (2018) emphasizes social identity and sociopsychological processes as the factors leading to social polarization (i.e, affective polarization) in which social identities and parties are increasingly linked into "megaparties." In the former perspective, group position manifests politically through preferences in representation, where groups prefer policies that benefit them and parties endorse policy positions that advance some group interests while excluding others; in the latter, group position manifests politically through status threat in zero-sum, tribal competition.

O'Brian (2024) argues that the racial realignment of the 1960s created path dependence leading to the current patterns of sorting and polarization. O'Brian maintains the racial realignment created path dependence by creating "primary electorates that diverged from each other not just on race, but on culture war issues like abortion or gun control as well", and because the Republican Party pursued racial conservatives after the Democratic Party began supporting civil rights (p. 31). O'Brian observes racial conservatives have tended to also hold conservative preferences on cultural issues as far back as the 1930s–long before realignment, implying that sorting and polarization are not an elite-driven phenomena and, instead, reflect an underlying "commitment to preserve traditional order and hierarchies" (p. 62). Rather, O'Brian argues, "elites can influence public opinion consistent with top-down accounts, but that elite cues are often endogenous to what elites perceive will be popular among their supporters" (p. 21).

That is, the current post-New Deal Democratic coalition emerged from co-opted independent group movements. Each group became politically conscious at different times for group-specific reasons (e.g., women's suffrage, LGBTQ+ rights such as gay marriage and trans rights), motivated to improve public regard or group position in the power structure. As time passed and the groups participated in the political arena, group-based needs created pressures–or motivation to approach or avoid–among groups to partner with (i.e., sort into), the party most palatable to their groups (i.e., least social distance; for elaboration on how "elites" create social distance, see Druckman et al 2022). Because of its advocacy for civil rights, liberal ideology, focus on representation (Klinkner 1994), and, thus, hierarchy-attenuating culture, the Democratic Party attracts groups that seek to alter the status quo. Indeed, Abramowitz (2018) observes that non-Whites aligned with the Democratic Party because Democratic presidential candidates between the 1960s and 1980s advocated for civil rights legislation and social welfare programs to redress racial and economic inequality, increasing their percentages of nonwhite Democratic partisan identification and voters, with the share of non-White voters growing from 16 percent in 1976 to 45 percent in 2012 (p. 48). To remain politically viable, the Republican Party began drawing from voters alienated by the Democratic Party's actions (O'Brian 2024, Abramowitz 2018).

In contrast to Smith and King (2024), I use the terms "hierarchy-enhancing," "hierachy-maintaing," and "hierarchy attenuating" from Social Dominance Theory (SDT; Sidanius and Pratto 1999, Pratto et al 2006), leveraging this framework to study narratives surrounding orientations to hierarchy. SDT is a general theory on societal group-based inequality from social psychology. According to SDT, group-based hierarchies of status and power emerge from evolutionary pressures across societies (Craig and Phillips, p. 847) as the products of the net effects of discrimination across multiple levels: individuals, collaborative intergroup processes, and institutions (Pratto et al 2006, 275). In this framework, individuals interact with hierarchy in two opposing ways: hierarchy-enhancement or hierarchy-maintenance versus hierarchy-attenuation (Craig and Phillips, p. 847). Moreover, groups craft hierarchy-enhancing legitimizing myths or hierarchy-attenuating legitimizing myths to explain intergroup relations, where the former provides moral and intellectual justification for group-based oppression and inequality and the latter counters dominance (Pratto et al 2006, p. 275-276). Groups tend to exhibit hierarchy orientations consistent with their dominant or subordinate status (Pratto et al 1999). These broader orientation descriptors enable my framework to bypass concerns about their value as enduring descriptive terms for academic analyses (Smith and King 2025, Hackett 2024), as the terms reflect fundamental orientations towards hierarchy observed across time and societies. Indeed, Smith and King (2024) reasonably chose the terms "protect" and "repair" because they found these terms "echoed the self-descriptions of the leading voices on each side of the current racial policy divides" (Smith and King 2025, p. 2618). However, I focus on the relationship between group position and hierarchy in studying how groups form "legitimizing myths."

Parties as Superordinate Categories and Conductors of Narratives

How do parties unite various groups that each have their own set of needs, including group-specific esteem enhancement? How do parties manage competing claims of discrimination and inequality? Following the MGP ingroup bias, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) SIT implies the

intra-group diversity within parties primes intergroup contexts among co-identifiers, thus activating ingroup bias in evaluations and behavior within coalitions. Intuitively, this state of intragroup relations impedes cooperation. The task of building consensus across subgroups is more complex for the political left than right, because it exhibits greater diversity than the right, which is racially homogenous with Whites. The current dominant approach on partisanship views it as an enduring identity but rejects the SIT (Green et al 2002). However, treating partisanship as a social identity and applying social-psychological theory clarifies the role that cross-pressures play in partisanship (Mason 2018). Moreover, the current approach does not explain how parties align heterogenous social groups into stable coalitions.

In this section, I argue partisanship is explained more fully with the inclusion of the dual process model of positive ingroup distinctiveness (Otten 2002) for social identity priming and the construct of superordinate identity (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000). I elaborate on how both frameworks enable parties to adapt to complex social environments and create sociopsychological spaces befitting party identifier needs and cultures. This argument implies the primacy of partisanship varies according to its psychological structure, with single recategorization establishing greater primacy than dual recategorization. To align heterogenous interests, I suggest parties converge on narratives based on hierarchy orientation as cross-cutting front. Narrative convergence implies that narratives compress heterogenous interests to align partisans, benefitting some groups more but also creating a cross-cutting basis under which all coalition groups advance.

First, to theoretically address the complexity diversity poses to intergroup cooperation within parties, I argue Otten's (2002) dual process model of positive ingroup distinctiveness better explains how party identifiers cooperate or defect within party coalitions. Otten (2002) argues that, in contrast to the primed intergroup context SIT assumes (e.g, Tajfel and Turner 1979), the MGP's positive ingroup differentiation can be explained through two processes: either intragroup or intergroup differentiation. In short, because the self-concept and social identities are stored in shared *connectionist memory networks,* the self and ingroup become interrelated through categorization, in which parts of social identities (e.g., norms, values, experiences) become associated with the self (Otten 2002, p. 7). As the self is typically evaluated positively, individuals project positive qualities of themselves onto ingroups when primed into a group, leading to intragroup differentiation with reference to the self rather than outgroups. Otten argues the self is used as an anchor or heuristic when individuals are faced with uncertainty in ingroup judgments. On the other hand, the self can also be primed in relation to an outgroup, leading to positive ingroup distinctiveness through intergroup differentiation in line with SIT. Concluding this line of reasoning, Otten (2002) argues that the self is a function of information processing influenced by situational and motivational factors.

Combined with the group-schematic model of political cognition (Zhirkov and Valentino 2022; see Conover and Feldman 1984), the dual process implies that affective polarization follows from how the self is associated in memory networks with race-party schemas–racialized mental images of parties (Zhirkov and Valentino 2022). Schemas are cognitive structures that organize information stored in memory and reduce the cost of information processing (Zhirkov and Valentino 2022). Schemas develop from information acquired directly (e.g., personal experience) and indirectly (e.g., partisan media; Zhirkov and Valentino 2022). When the self is

intertwined with a race-party schema, the valence of association becomes "warm;" in contrast, when the race-party schema is repeatedly primed as an outgroup to the self, the valence of association becomes "cold" (see Zhirkov and Valentino 2022). This combination is consistent with the motivated reasoning model (Lodge and Taber 2013) and provides insight into how cognitive and affective biases emerge in motivated reasoning.

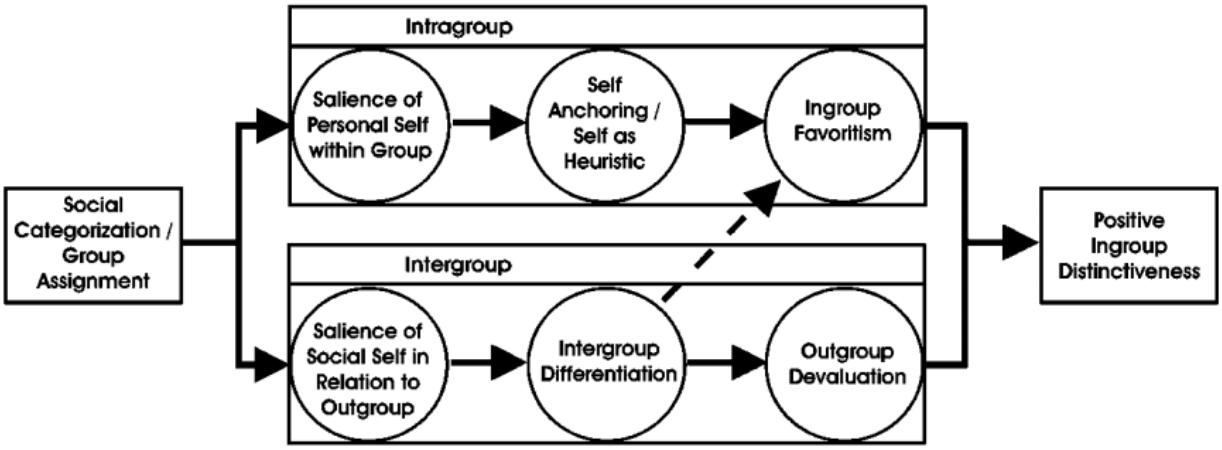


Figure 5. A dual process model of positive ingroup distinctiveness.

Otten (2002), p. 22

Political scientists conceptualize parties as social categories that bundle social groups, explaining each category has stereotypes in the public mind regarding their demographic composition (Green et al 2002; Zhirkov and Valentino 2022). Democrats are perceived as racial minorities whereas Republicans are perceived as Whiter, more Protestant individuals (Green et al 2002). Green and colleagues (2002) maintain individuals sort themselves into political parties given these stereotypes, siding with the party they feel most "resonates" with their self-perceptions. Individuals can empathize with party values and goals or incorporate them into their self-conception–"identify with" or "identify as," respectively (Green et al 2002). Mason (2018) argues the public has sorted "into two increasingly homogenous parties, with a variety of social, economic, geographic, and ideological cleavages falling in line with the partisan divide. This creates two megaparties, with each party representing not only policy positions but also an increasing list of other social cleavages" (p. 20). To add further theoretical nuance to partisanship, I draw from literature in social psychology to add superordinate identity conceptualization of parties allows researchers to better capture party subgroup variation in party identification.

Superordinate identities are broader categories that option access to lower social identities (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000). They are created by emphasizing shared attributes, such as a "common fate or goal," or an existing common identity (Moss 2017, p. 926). Major and Dover (2016) observe common ingroup identities frame typical outgroups (e.g., blacks to whites, whites to blacks) as ingroup members (Black Americans and White Americans). They facilitate ingroup

bias between lower categories, and findings in social psychology suggest they are robust to ingroup power heterogeneity (Major and Dover 2016). Moss (2017) explains recategorization into a superordinate identity can be single, in that the common identity is exclusively emphasized without permitting subordinate identities, or dual, in which the superordinate identity is emphasized while subordinate identities are permitted. Gaertner and Dovidio (2000) find minorities prefer dual recategorization whereas majority groups prefer single recategorization: "Groups prefer the recategorization approach perceived as most beneficial to specific group needs" (Moss 2017, p. 927). These findings are consistent with recent work investigating motivated reasoning in the context of identity politics which finds that members of involuntary low-status groups ascribe more importance to low-status identities relative to political identities (Boyer et al 2022; also see Tajfel and Turner 1979). Overall, superordinate identities can expand ingroup bias through common ground within a larger set of social categories, and this, consequently, decreases the likelihood of intergroup conflict among subgroups (Gaertner and Dovidio 2000). These conditions foster transfer of information among members (Argote and Kane 2009).

The dual process model (Otten 2002) is especially useful in explaining intergroup relations when combined with the construct of superordinate identities. When identifying with a superordinate identity that permits dual categorization, individuals retain subgroup identities while simultaneously identifying with the more-inclusive identity. The dual process model allows us to interpret this complex context as one in which individuals retain their subgroup identity and project positive self-qualities onto outgroups that fall under the superordinate identity, absent other information such as intergroup contact (Otten 2002). Therefore, positive ingroup bias may extend to evaluation and treatment of superordinate outgroups yet the subgroup may experience the greatest bias as it is more closely associated with the self (e.g., race versus partisanship).

To demonstrate the importance of capturing subgroup diversity or variation in parties, I reference work on party culture. Using archival research and extensive interviews with party elites–data spanning nearly four decades, Klinkner (1994) advances a cultural-historical theory explaining party response to electoral loss. In short, Klinkner argues parties are more influenced by their own organizational cultures than rational strategies in responding to loss: the Democratic Party perceives itself as a vehicle for inclusion, striving to enhance constituent representation after a loss; the Republican Party perceives itself as a professional organization meant to be run efficiently, discouraging individualism and emphasizing deference to authority, and responses to loss reflect this hierarchical culture. Thus, Klinkner's (1994) research suggests party identifiers draw from distinct emergent cultures to determine how to behave.

Observing Klinkner's (1994) concurrence with Freeman (1986) that social homogeneity within the Republican party facilitates authoritarian and organizational culture via familiarity and trust (Klinkner 1994, p. 204), I advance that the Republican category emphasizes recategorization into a single category because of sufficient racial homogeneity. On the other hand, as both scholars observe, the Democratic party's greater social "... heterogeneity facilitates misunderstanding" (Klinker 1994, p. 208; Freeman 1986, p. 351). Moreover, Klinker (1994) details that the Democratic party strives to better represent its constituency and encourages constituent expression. Therefore, I maintain the Democratic category allows for dual

recategorization, reflecting each category has similar yet unique grievances. For example, immigrants share similar hardships yet their ethnic or religious diversities are acknowledged. Given intraparty variation, I suggest parties also have varying cultures surrounding discrimination (i.e, prototypes, stereotypes, narratives).

I maintain that extending ingroup bias through such common ground also enables meaningful coordination between party identifiers, enabling them to adapt to social and political conflicts. Individuals have multiple "lenses" with which to appraise their political environment (e.g., discrimination) based on various attributes (e.g., race, religion, gender, socioeconomic status) that structure their central group identities and interests. These attributes and their social networks influence political evaluations and affiliations individuals make in realizing those interests (Lazarsfeld et al 1968; Green et al 2002; e.g., sorting into a party; Fiorina 2008; Krupnikov and Ryan 2022). Given multiple lenses and that parties are victory-oriented, one crucial task for parties is to collate constituent lenses around a "cross-cutting front" (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Building on literature on group consciousness which highlights the role of elite clarification of group threat for ingroup members (see Berry et al 2020, Cepuran and Berry 2022), I suggest parties cultivate narratives based on hierarchy orientation to manage social identity complexity and intergroup relations–to digest diversity and orient individuals electorally. That is, parties chronically motivate individuals to think about themselves and social groups in specific ways actively or passively through campaigns in addition to other forms of socialization or culture. Parties have disproportionate control over political agendas, thus greatly influencing public opinion.

Multiple lenses indicate individuals have social identity complexity (Miller et al 2009; Roccas and Brewer 2002). That is, individuals vary in their subjective self-representations through social categories, ranging from low to high complexity (Fig. 1; Roccas and Brewer 2002). It is not unreasonable to posit that all categories have cross-cutting memberships: for example, not all men are of one racial group, and not all males are of one species. Therefore, the theoretical and empirical interests lay in the self-portrayal, its complexity, and its correlates (Fig. 2). For example, a man that is both Latino and Catholic may associate primarily with Catholic, Latino men (Fig 1 (a)). Then, he may imagine men primarily as Latino, though there are many non-Latino men. Similarly, he may imagine Catholics as largely Latino, though there are non-Latino Catholics globally.

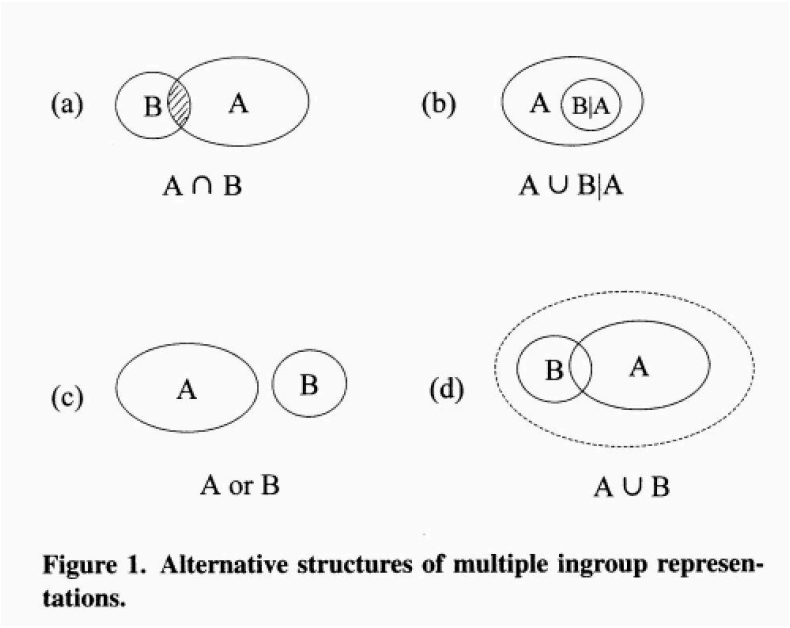


Figure 1. Alternative structures of multiple ingroup representations.

Roccas and Brewer (2002), p. 90

In a series of experiments, Miller and colleagues (2009) demonstrate social identity complexity is subject to endogenous (i.e., "motivational") and exogenous ("situational") influences. Specifically, building on Roccas and Brewer (2002), Miller and colleagues (2009) find that social identity complexity is related to socialized values (i.e., ideology; universalism versus authoritarianism or conservatism), experiences with a complex social environment (i.e., neighborhood diversity), and cognitive style (or "need for cognition") such that chronic complex representation of social identities is cultivated "by openness and cognitive elaboration in processing and thinking about the social landscape, including one's own social group memberships" (p. 92). To be clear,

> To develop a complex representation of their own social identity, individuals must be open to information about their groups beyond their own personal experience, motivated to think about the differences among their ingroups, and willing to tolerate a certain degree of ambiguity in defining ingroup-outgroup boundaries (Miller et al 2009, p. 82).

In the American two-party system, parties must confront a variety of combinations of lenses as they reflect different esteem needs that must be coordinated sufficiently to be electorally viable, as the "identities … reflect on how they are socially embedded … depending on the interaction with opponents and allies, a collective identity politicizes" (Klandermans 2014, p. 16). Therefore, observing social identity complexity and some of its correlates, I maintain that the Republican category, consistent with its recategorization into one category, encourages and exhibits low social identity complexity; whereas the Democratic category encourages and exhibits greater social identity complexity. In this way, the two parties have not only distinct cultures, but also distinct social psychological orientations. I also observe the parties draw constituents from environments with consistent levels of social identity complexity, respectively: Republicans from rural areas and Democrats from urban areas (see Gimpel et al 2020 for a discussion on urban-rural differences in partisan political loyalty).

Parties as Havens

I maintain parties are able to foster superordinate identities and common narratives by providing socially homophilous space (Graham 2016, Mason 2018) to constituents, commonly termed "echo chambers." These environments serve as stable, chronic situational factors from which narratives that explain intergroup conflict emerge. They enable a "polyphony of voices" to express themselves within like-minded networks (Murthy 2013, p. 3-4; though see Graham 2016; Krupnikov and Ryan 2022). The homophilous nature of parties stems from their "porous borders" (i.e, open membership) that individuals can self-select into or identify with (Campbell et al 1960). That is, I suggest "parties are expressions of already formed, densely organized, and socially closed groups …" (Hooghe and Marks 2017; p. 4). Hence, part of what fosters safety in these places is the social homogeneity exhibited by parties.

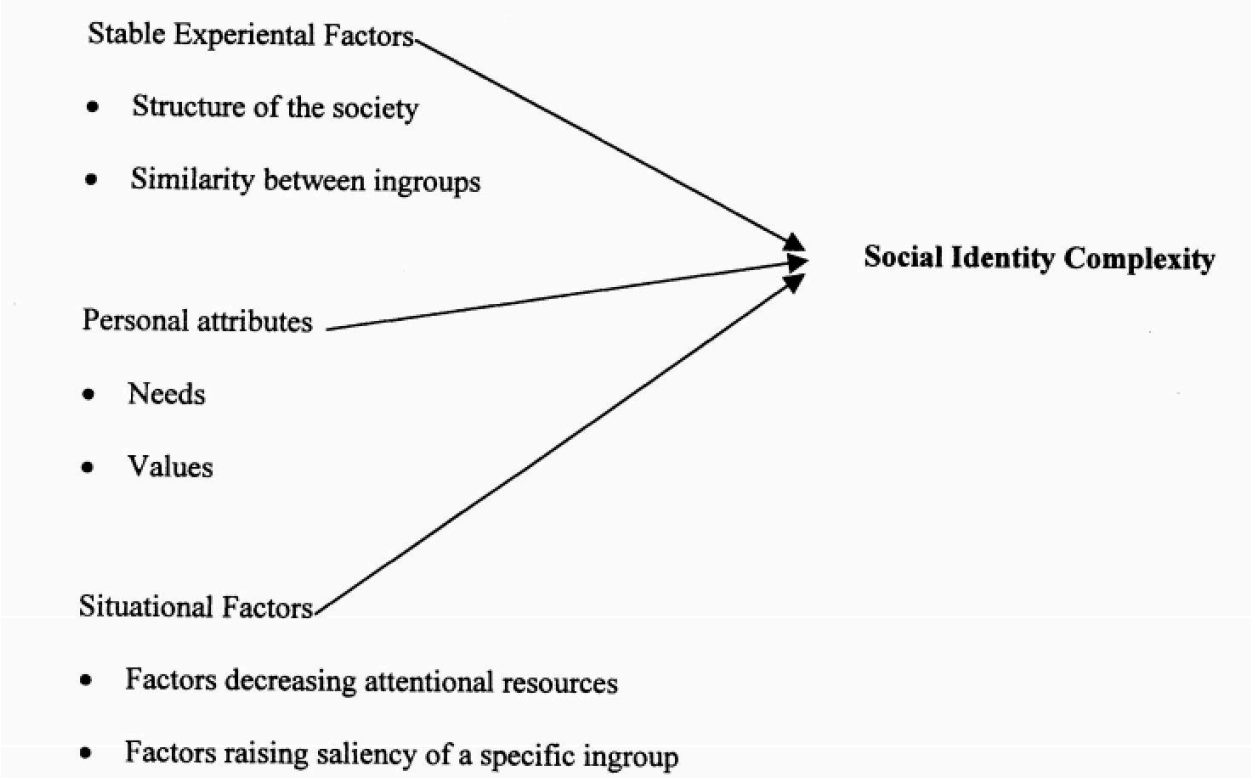


Figure 2. Hypothesized antecedents of social identity complexity.

Roccas and Brewer (2002), p. 95

Furthermore, the common spaces created by parties reduce costs of sharing grievances and expressing group-based interests. Researchers have described divulging attribution to discrimination as potentially controversial–creating the potential for rejection–and can be thus socially costly (Major and Dover 2016). Shared orientations to the status quo foster compassion or empathy among identifiers. Essentially, these orientations are common denominators between

individuals that enable bonding. To be clear, party identifiers bond through shared motivations to enhance or attenuate hierarchy. These shared cognitive and affective predispositions enable transmission of information among identifiers, positively predisposing intergroup contact processes, framing extended contact or exposure in a palatable way.

Although there is social heterogeneity in both parties, I emphasize that the nexus between intraparty groups across parties is their motivation to either enhance (i.e., Republicans and conservatives; e.g., see Jost 2019) or alter hierarchy in fundamental ways (Democrats and liberals; e.g., Pew Research Recenter 2021; see Smith and King 2024). I maintain that this nexus functions as both a "mega identity" in "megaparties" (Mason 2018) and source for ideological innovation (Abramowitz 2018). Abramowitz, (2018) argues the two major parties can be characterized as two camps, one with negative views on transformative cultural and social changes in American society traceable to the 1960s and another that views the same changes positively. Furthermore, Smith and King (2024) argue that, today, there are two major racial policy alliances each aligned with their consonant party–one liberal, one conservative. There is consensus among the liberal alliance that "American institutions need systematic if not radical repair" whereas the conservative alliance finds consensus in that America must be protected from radical, liberal changes (Smith and King 2024, p. 21). The liberal alliance ranges from moderate color-blind policy positions to abolitionism, which advocates for fundamental systemic reform to cease continued generation of inequality that privileges Whites; in contrast, the conservative alliance ranges from color-blind policy positions to White supremacy. Smith and King maintain that the liberal alliance has recently moved leftward to advocate for systemic racial equity initiates (i.e., "reparations") whereas the conservative alliance has moved rightward to white protectionism, which advocates against undoing systemic racial inequalities in order to prevent status losses among Whites. Therefore, the Republican Party can be characterized as hierarchy-enhancing or hierarchy-maintaining while the Democratic Party is hierarchy-attenuating (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). I emphasize these motivations stem from group interests, such as improving or maintaining group position (i.e., "clout;" Wilkinson 2015), and are aligned with ideology (i.e., group position affects appraisal of status quo and affects choice of ideology, preferring socially closest–most palatable; see Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

I acknowledge learning is only one of the processes of intergroup contact change (Pettigrew 1998), but it appears to be the modal way intergroup learning occurs at large. Clearly, forms of contact vary, but research reveals both most party identifiers largely abstain from political life (Downs 1957) and people abstain from engaging in intergroup-contact (Byrne 1971; Pettigrew 1998; Krupnikov and Ryan 2022). Thus, I suggest the majority of "contact" occurs through media and culture disseminated from group members or party elites in echo chambers (i.e., "pseudo" contact or virtual contact; Beniger 1987). Indeed, research finds the public relies on elites for guidance on political developments and group threat (e.g., Berry et al 2020, Cepuran and Berry 2022). Although parties have limited control over content in intersubjective space, given public policy preferring a less-regulated "marketplace of ideas," their organizational power and resources allow them to regularly exert disproportionate influence through public opinion campaigns relative to individuals or other organizations (Cohen et al 2009; however, see Cox 2019 for an exceptional public opinion campaign conducted by Confederate sympathizers in the South).

While acknowledging the importance of chronic cognitions on discrimination and political attitudes, I emphasize the role of narratives. I suggest parties converge on a subset of beliefs satisfying organizational and constituent interests (e.g., Klinkner 1995; Downs 1957). Narratives function as simplified representations of information (e.g., about an event or group in the environment) that individuals recall to describe events to the self and others and to render "judgments or behavioral decisions" (Wyer et al 2002, p. 131). In social psychology, Wyer and colleagues (2002, p. 132) observe, narratives are studied in understanding observed behavior, reconstructions of the past, perceptions of close relationships, and decision making.

Because parties cultivate ingroup bias among co-identifiers, I suggest conflicts exhibit competitive victimhood. The biased nature of parties–to win elections by appealing to constituent interests–cultivates ingroup bias in narratives about intergroup relations. Competitive victimhood refers to intergroup conflict in which groups hold steadfast to ingroup grievances and refuse cooperating towards resolution with perceived offenders (Solomon and Martin 2019; Young and Sullivan 2016). Smith and King (2024) find that the liberal and conservative major racial policy alliances that have each aligned with their respective parties "to a considerable degree" blame each other "for becoming more extreme, compelling heightened opposition on their own part" (p. 11). Observing groups across parties are opposed (Iyengar et al 2012, Mason 2018, Abramowitz 2018, Smith and King 2024, O'Brian 2024), groups within parties exhibit ingroup bias, and parties exhibit a collective bias reflecting constituents, I suggest parties cultivate common narratives that manage partisan social complexity (Miller et al 2009; Roccas and Brewer 2002; though see Klinkner 1994), rendering a common narrative based on hierarchy orientation that privileges some but under which all advance. In turn, this narrative facilitates extending ingroup bias to fellow outgroup co-partisans, enabling sharing of resources such as political capital and explaining intergroup or interparty conflict in a maximally palatable way.

To articulate how such narratives emerge, I turn to literature on social psychological adaptation to intergroup conflict. Bar-Tal (2007) argues groups adapt to intractable mass conflicts to represent the ingroup as a victim of the opponent through collective memory, ethos of conflict, and collective emotional orientation. Like Bar-Tal, I suggest these structures entrench and further intergroup conflict–specifically, social polarization–but add that elites shape perceptions of discrimination through narrative. I suggest parties help create this sociopsychological infrastructure to explain intergroup relations, help identifiers cope with stress, and help "withstand the rival."

In American politics, I maintain, conflicts are partly sustained by mechanics of Constitutional allocation of power and the two-party system. Legal mechanisms such as Separation of Powers and Checks and Balances prevent concentration of power in a single entity (e.g., an individual or party) as well as foster contestation between branches and levels of government. Today, sharp party divisions manifest across all major political institutions, including those designed to be unbiased such as the Supreme Court (Abramowitz 2018). While political gridlock (e.g., Congress) and frustration among the public ensues, the Founders intended to prevent tyranny through neverending political competition. Moreover, the transfer of power between parties in the executive branch prolongs conflict because opponents are not obligated to honor each other's policies: policies which some view as means to an end are always contestable and can be undone or substantially weakened with enough support when another

president enters office. Hence, the perpetual competition created by the Constitution does not allow for simple resolution of conflict, such as in unitary or autocratic systems that concentrate power in decision-making to greater degrees, including over perceptual and policy disputes.

Additionally, I maintain that two-party systems bifurcate ideological space, pressuring politicians to align with an ideological side to be viable contenders and, thus, concentrating policy choice under a catch-all liberal umbrella and its conservative counterpart. In any society, populations can be distributed across liberal-conservative space in terms of preferences on political, economic, and social issues. Furthermore, Sidanius and Pratto (1999; Pratto et al 2006) observe that hierarchy-attenuating and hierarchy-enhancing orientations develop across societies, with those on the lower end of inequality exhibiting the former and those on the higher end exhibiting the latter. Third, political scientists converge on the idea that parties must have differentiable platforms to be viable competitors–by articulating positions on policy issues (Downs 1957) or establishing some cross-cutting front that alienates some but creates stable associations among others (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Fundamental cleavage theorists Lipset and Rokkan (1967) observe the Democratic Party functions as the anti-establishment party in the American two-party system. Quoting H.G. Wells (1910), Lipset and Rokkan (1967) describe it and liberal ideology as means for criticizing "the big established classes" (e.g., beneficiaries of inequality, dominant religions)–it is "the anti party" (p. 5). Its hierarchy-attenuating disposition inherently leads to "a gathering together of all the smaller interests which find themselves at a disadvantage" (Lipset and Rokkan, p. 5). The diversity in the party complicates achieving a "common soul," because the coalition results from ad hoc organization among subgroups countering established adversaries (Lipset and Rokkan, p. 5-6). Because of the Democratic Party's hierarchy orientation, the Republican Party is constrained to appeal to conservatives (O'Brian 2024). Hence, the hierarchy-attenuating and hierarchy-enhancing orientations that naturally manifest across societies are pressured to align with the dominant liberal and conservative parties in two-party systems.

Building on Kriesberg's (1998) proposed four necessary characteristics, Bar-Tal suggests intractable conflicts are: 1) perceived as irresolvable, 2) protracted, 3) violent, 4) demand extensive investment, 5) total, 6) perceived as zero sum, and 7) central. Because conflicts are 1) perceived as irresolvable, the public perceives that neither side can win, and, therefore, conflict cannot be resolved peacefully. Abramowitz (2018) observes that "dramatic changes in American society and culture … have divided the public into two opposing camps–those who welcome those changes and those who feel threatened by them" (p. 2). Mason (2018) observes, the two-party nature of the American political system "discourages compromise and encourages an escalation of conflict" (p. 4). Therefore, not only do partisans perceive conflicts as irresolvable, but systemic design makes them unresolvable.

2) Intractable conflicts are protracted, lasting at least a generation. According to Bar-Tal, there are members implicated in conflict that did not experience its beginning but still adapt. I argue that this condition is met in the United States, as the competition between parties and conflicts between dominant and subordinate groups that led to the post-New Deal party system have occurred over generations. Moreover, Smith and King (2004) claim that "unresolved conflicts over racial issues have characterized America and its governance" (p. 8), implying protracted conflict over White hegemony.

3) Intractable conflicts also involve violence against society members perceived as both illegitimate and perpetrated by outgroups. Although conflict between social groups does not normally involve violence today, there is substantial history in which subordinate groups regularly incurred violence perpetrated by dominant groups to maintain hierarchy which subordinate groups perceive as illegitimate and have internalized (Dawson 1995; DeFilippis and Anderson-Nathe 2017). For example, Smith and King (2024) find that the murders of African Americans (e.g., George Floyd and Breonna Taylor) functioned as catalysts that transformed racial movements on the left from advocacy of integration to systemic "repair" in order to better address systemic racial inequality. There have also been recent mass hate crimes against the LGBTQ+ community (e.g. the 2016 Pulse nightclub shooting; Stults et al 2017) and religious minorities (the 2012 shooting at a Wisconsin Sikh congregation; Scheitle and Hansmann 2016) that received national attention. Along these lines, Smith and King (2024) also find that some conservatives view armed conflict with the left as necessary to "protect" America.

4) Groups involved in intractable conflicts expend "vast" material and psychological resources. There is no dispute that increasingly, over time, viable presidential campaigns must maneuver greater financial obstacles and must exert mass persuasion or mobilization. Regarding the public, there is research documenting negative impacts on physical, psychological, and social health outcomes among those politically engaged and opposed to the first term of the administration of President Donald J. Trump (Smith 2022), indicating weighty costs associated with political engagement in the current emotionally-charged, polarized context (Iyengar and Westwood 2015, Iyengar et al 2019).

5) Intractable conflicts are total in that groups perceive them "as being about essential and basic goals, needs, and/or values that are regarded as indispensable for the society's existence and/or survival" (Bar-Tal 2007, p. 1433). Bar-Tal observes intractable conflicts tend to be multifaceted and involve matters such as the economy, culture, or religion. As groups have increasingly sorted into parties, social identities have become increasingly linked to parties, leading to what Mason (2018) describes as identity-based democracy. For example, both dominant religious groups (i.e., Evangelical and born-again Christians) and economic conservatives are aligned with the Republican party while subordinate religious groups (agnostic, Jews, Muslims) and economic liberals have aligned with the Democratic party. Then, these groups are not only opposed ideologically or culturally, they are also opposed politically (Putnam and Campbell 2010). Moreover, the parties "compete for the power to implement very different policy platforms, affecting the entire nation" (Mason 2018, p. 47). Increasingly, partisans believe that the other party pursues goals that pose serious harm to the country (Abramowitz 2018). These alignments have led to "negative partisanship" in which partisans are primarily motivated by strong negative affect towards the opposing party grounded in perceived wide social and political distances rather than positive affect for their party, such that partisans are motivated more to vote against the opposing party rather than supporting their own (Abramowitz 2018).

6) Intractable conflicts are perceived as zero sum in nature because groups implicated in the conflict are uncompromising, focused on their own goals–which are perceived as essential for survival, and outgroup losses are viewed as ingroup victories. Mason (2018) observes that victory is a strong motivator in identity-based democracy. Smith and King (2024) argue that

conflict between the major racial “protect” and “repair” alliances is zero-sum, where each struggles for institutional and cultural dominance, and there is evidence indicating partisans prefer that representatives not compromise with the competing party (Wolf et al 2012).

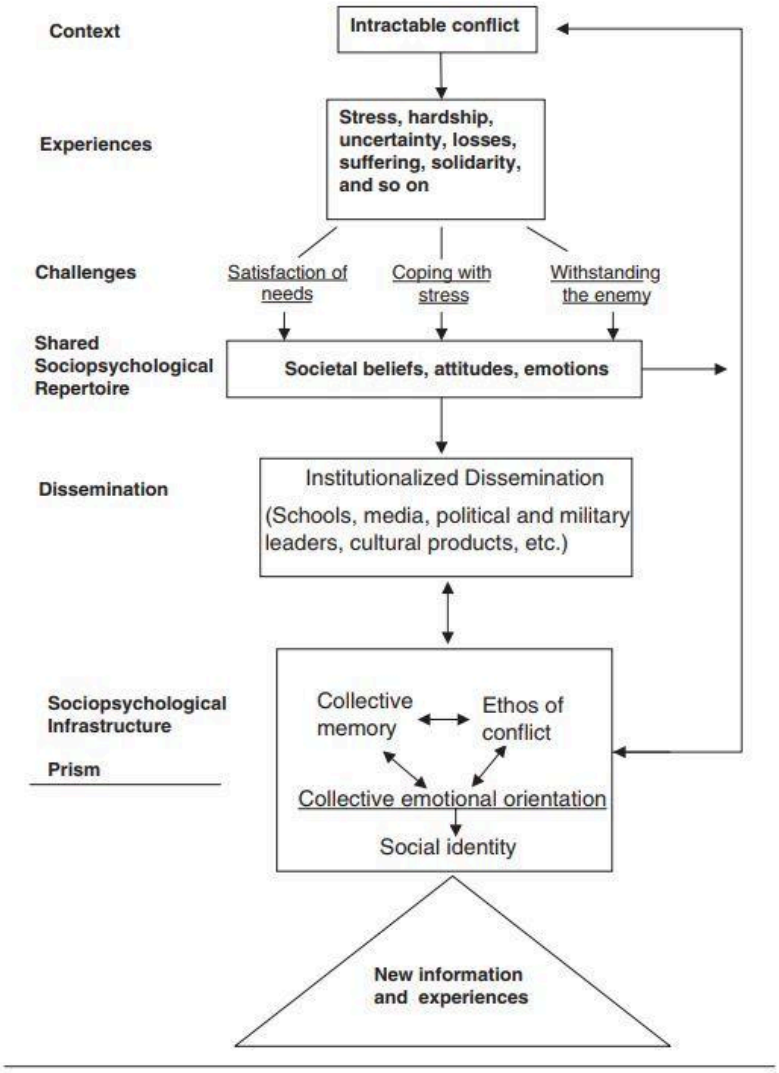
7) Lastly, intractable conflicts are highly salient in daily life, media, and other institutions. Although substantial literature finds that individuals do not partake in politics because they are costly (e.g., Downs 1957) or because of lack of psychological engagement (Campbell et al 1960), there is recent research indicating an increase in political engagement and changing political norms and values (Dalton 2021). This research shifts focus from duty-based citizenship (e.g., voting, patriotism, deference to authority) to engaged citizenship (volunteerism, protest, expressing social concern), arguing that societal changes necessitate re-examination of what it means to be politically engaged. Indeed, a recent Pew (2018) study found that nearly seventy percent of Americans participated in politics by volunteering, donating, protesting or attending meetings, or expressing views on social media in the past five years while forty-six percent reported doing so in the last year. Additionally, there is some experimental evidence indicating that partisanship spills over into apolitical domains, such as economic behavior (McConnell et al 2018).

Bar-Tal (2007) argues groups adapt to intractable conflicts by developing interrelated sociopsychological structures to help cope with and fulfill needs affected by conflict. I argue the alignment between dominant and subordinate groups and parties has been stable for so long that party culture and partisans have formed the socio-psychological structures Bar-Tal describes: collective memory, ethos of conflict, and collective emotional orientation. Collective memory refers to societal beliefs (i.e., beliefs and cognitions shared by society members that describe the world and contribute to the members' "sense of uniqueness", p. 1435) that describe the history of conflict to society members. Ethos of conflict refer to societal beliefs that provide a narrative for individuals to understand the present and have a sense of the future. Collective emotional orientation refers to the emotional tendency for members of a culture to develop in response to conflict, such as anger, pride, or fear. Bar-tal (2007) observes the sociopsychological “infrastructure becomes hegemonic, rigid, and resistant to change as long as the intractable conflict continues. It ends up serving as a major factor fueling the continuation of the conflict, thus becoming part of a vicious cycle of intractable conflict” (p. 1430).

These sociopsycholigcal adaptations manifest through institutionalization and can be found in cultural artifacts. Bar-Tal observes four characteristics of institutionalization: extensive sharing, wide application, expression in cultural products, and appearance in educational materials (p. 1444-1445). Essentially, the characterizations suggest chronic cognitions and related affect–emanating from socio-psychological structures through sharing (i.e., socialization, ranging from daily conversations heightening the accessibility of cognitions, to ceremonies, to cultural goods such as mass entertainment media)-chronically motivate individual decisions and explanations in specific ways such that cohesive societies emerge and are maintained. Beliefs from sociopsychological structures are most concrete in their forms as cultural goods such as textbooks, which are tools of socialization usable from early age to adulthood. Bar-Tal observes that sociopsychological structures are robust to contradictory information, as individuals and societies reject contradictory information and instead bolster dissemination of congruous information. Extending this argument to newer media, I build on more recent research on social

media platforms emphasizing the importance of content mingling in homophilous spaces (Graham 2016). Political communication on such platforms (e.g., Twitter) tends to be polarized (Himelboim et al 2017) and networks tend to be homophilous or reflect such bias for such interaction (Himelboim et al 2013).

Figure 1
Conceptual Model of the Psychological Foundations of Intractable Conflicts



Bar-Tal (2007), p. 1437

Parties as Conductors of Narratives

I maintain parties converge on common narratives that satisfy organizational and constituent interests, facilitating both bonding among co-identifiers and policy decisions in complex social environments. I emphasize the role of elites on influencing narratives, given that campaigns and

leaders can engender strong emotions in their publics (Banks and Bell 2013, Matsumoto et al 2015), that elite ingroup members clarify threats for comembers (Cepuran and Berry 2022, Berry et al 2020), and that political parties can exert disproportionate influence on public opinion relative to other individuals and organizations (Cohen et al 2009). The narratives simplify intergroup relations and help identifiers adapt to conflict by meaningfully organizing information about the past, present, and future through collective memory, ethos of conflict, and collective emotional orientation. This sociopsychological infrastructure (i.e., collective memory, ethos of conflict, and collective emotional orientation) is comprised of societal beliefs that describe the history of conflict in a manner enabling esteem-enhancement, orient individuals in the present to set goals for the future, and provide "the context, information, cues, models, and instructions against which the emotions of its members arise" (Bar-Tal 2007, p. 1439).

Building on Sidanius and Pratto (1999) and Bar-Tal (2007), I suggest *societal beliefs of one's own victimization* and *societal beliefs delegitimizing the opponent* (Bar-Tal 2007) shape perceptions of discrimination by portraying actions the opponent takes which have implications on the ingroup, whether "colorblind" or not overtly directed at the ingroup, as illegitimate and "attribute all responsibility for the outbreak of conflict and its continuation to the opponent" (Bar-Tal 2007, p. 1441). Additionally, I suggest *societal beliefs of unity* emphasize hierarchy orientation to unify diverse interests and establish "the importance of ignoring internal conflicts and disagreements during intractable conflict to unite the forces in the face of the external threat" (Bar-Tal 2007, p. 1438). Therefore, partisan narratives allow partisans to share a similar past, present, and future.

I maintain dominant groups in the Republican Party have developed a hierarchy-enhancing narrative that reflects anxiety and resentment over perceived status threats (Blumer 1956; Bartels 2006; Jardina 2019; Cramer 2016; Hochschild 2016, Smith and King 2024), and subordinate groups in the Democratic party have developed a hierarchy-attenuating narrative that reflects common grievances against dominant groups and systemic relative disadvantage (Smith and King 2024, Lipset and Rokkan 1967). To illustrate parties bringing together diverse groups through narrative, I review recent work on narratives in the political left and right. I draw first from Smith and King (2024), who conducted one of the most comprehensive, multimethod studies on the role of race in American Political Development, including social network analysis, interviews with activists, surveys, and review of public policies. They identified two major, contemporary liberal "repair" and conservative "protect" racial policy alliances that each have common narratives motivating "repair" of systemic inequalities in favor of subordinate groups or "protection" of traditional institutions and traditionalist Americans from perceived radical reform.

I briefly review research on narratives in the political left, observing Democratic or liberal narratives have received less scholarly attention. While uniting these disparate interests is a complex task, the Democratic dual-category superordinate identity and its hierarchy-attenuating culture provide inclusive structure in intraparty relations and common ground. To document the "repair story" many on the left converge on, Smith and King (Ch. 6) draw from organizations such as Movement for Black Lives (M4BL) and the American Descendants of Slavery (ADOS). Many groups in the left view themselves as continuations of Black resistance against White supremacy, which is perceived as stemming from the inception of the country and contaminating

the Constitution. Although many on the left acknowledge they build on perspectives from the 1960s, they perceive important differences and draw from more recent intellectual fodder, such as Black feminist and Black queer perspective–thus their greater emphasis on intersectionality, which adds greater nuance to social stratification. Moreover, in contrast to conservatives, the Repair alliance emphasizes decentralized leadership, noting that the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement has advocates for "'grassroots group-centered approach to leadership'" (Smith and King 2024, p. 204).

Many on the left view contemporary racial conservatism "as a feverish reassertion, against what have so far been only modest changes, of the political, economic, social, and ideological interests that first created the United States and have sustained it as a society dominated by wealthy white Christian men ever since" (Smith and King 2024, p. 203). To "repair" the country, advocates propose systemic transformations to pursue justice for and promote the welfare of groups historically and actively harmed by systemic bias (e.g., systemic racism, anti-LGBTQ+ policies). Some of the policies towards these ends include reparations, which have evolved from tort payments to policies such as funding for Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and to identifying ADOS as a protected class in the criminal justice system. The most prominent "repair" leader, Bernie Sanders, advocates for many of the policies shared by the alliance "but refuses to treat race as its central concern" (Smith and King 2024, p. 207).

In contrast to the left, literature on narratives among the socially homogenous right suggests coordination is subject to less complications and emphasizes deference to authority. To document "The Conservatives' Story," (Ch. 4), Smith and King (2024) interviewed and studied the narratives among conservative public opinion leaders, such as associates of the Claremont Institute, Christopher Caldwell and Charles Kesler. Smith and King find that conservatives converge on a consistent narrative in which a handful of themes emerge. Conservatives commonly identify "the corporate elite, the media elite, the political elite, and the academic elite" (p. 100) along with Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ+, and immigrants as fundamental threats to American institutions and traditionalist Americans. They view these groups as hegemonic, exerting vast influence even through smaller actors such as progressive teachers.

While some conservatives trace sources farther back, most converge on the Civil Rights Era of the 1960s as the period which laid the intellectual groundwork for the current manifestation of liberalism. Many view the Civil Rights Era as having been derailed from colorblind principles to race-conscious principles, developed in part by Black Marxists and Black Power advocates. Conservatives blame heightening polarization on these groups because of their support for racial policy issues, such as affirmative action and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) policies, which they view as creating "an environment in which many racial minorities and white liberals see all racial disparities as demonstrating the need for transformative systemic changes" (p. 102). At the core of conservative gripe is that liberals view America as fundamentally racist and that their radical agenda is largely motivated by this idea. Conservatives charge that a powerful, modern manifestation of this radical intellectualism is CRT, which they allege continuously expands what constitutes racism, and the Black Lives Matter movement. Both are alleged to contribute to the prevalence of public opinion that America is systemically racist. Conservatives also blame immigrants and the LGBTQ+ community and their supporters as eroding traditional cultural and family values due to their divergent group interests.

Smith and King review evidence indicating the common narrative they identify resonates strongly with individuals who exhibit social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto et al 1994), or who favor socially dominant groups such as Whites, Christians, and males. These individuals were more likely to report that Whites are more discriminated against than racial minorities, men are more discriminated against than women, and that Christians are more discriminated against than Muslims (p. 112). Moreover, Smith and King review evidence indicating that Protestantism is linked to American identity (i.e., conservatives view America as a Protestant country) indicating challenges to either imply challenges to both. In reaction to the perceived liberal agenda and its threats, conservatives conclude that they should "take vigorous actions to protect traditionalist Americans, their values, their customs, and their institutions" rather than promote color-blind public policies (p. 99).

In studying conservative narratives, Frank (2004) argues conservative elites (e.g., presidents such as Ronald Reagan or opinion leaders in media such as Rush Limbaugh) leveraged "Great Backlash" conservatism to persuade working-class Whites that the left is directly harmful to their interests, if not aloof. Frank investigates why working-class Whites align with the Republican party despite inconsistency with individual economic interests. While Frank and other authors referenced in this section (Hochschild 2016; Cramer 2016) conducted their studies on samples within states (Kansas, Louisiana, and Wisconsin, respectively), their arguments reflect polarization at large (see Cramer 2016, p. 2).

According to Frank, Great Backlash conservatism evolved from fiscal conservatism and backlash against hippie culture and war protests in the 1960s to emphasize cultural wedge issues (e.g., religion, race/immigration, guns, LGBTQ+ rights, "the liberal media," and abortion) in order to mobilize working-class Whites (see Bartel 2006 for a rebuttal which argues that the White working-class became slightly more Democratic and still emphasized economic interests). Frank attributes the evolution to the need for conservatives to redirect grievance from economic inequality and animus against dominant business interests–which are a conservative group that working-class Whites previously mobilized against–to the erosion of "traditional" American values. Moreover, the backlash narrative allows this demographic to imagine "itself as a foe of the elite, as the voice of the unfairly persecuted, as a righteous protest of the people on history's receiving end" (Frank 2004; p. 5-6).

Inspired by Frank (2004), Hochschild (2016) also explores a similar puzzle of working-class Whites supporting policies subversive to their individual interests while opposing policies aligned with their interests, which she refers to as "The Great Paradox." Similar to Frank, Hochschild finds Tea Party supporters–the population of interest–blame subordinate groups and their elites as opposed to business interests for their tribulation, and that conservative media, especially Fox News, exert a strong influence over their views. To concert her efforts, Hochschild focuses on the cross-cutting "keyhole" issue of environmentalism, finding the majority of interviewees value their environment (e.g., bayous, lakes) but are opposed to environmental regulation despite long-standing, severe industrial pollution in the state.

Hochschild (2016) argues that, to understand The Great Puzzle, one must understand the "feeling rules" (norms over what is emotionally expected and accepted; p. 15) among the right

through a "`deep story,' a story that *feels as if* it were true … The deep story was to take me to the shoulds and shouldn'ts of feeling, to the management of feeling, and to the core feelings stirred by charismatic leaders." (Hochschild 2016; p. 16). She refers to deep stories as "subjective prisms" (p. 135) through which parties and partisans view the world. Hochschild conveys the deep story on the right as a metaphor in which they wait in line with the public to attain the American Dream, which rests at the top of a hill. However, despite that supporters wait patiently and behave ethically through tribulation, they are betrayed by liberal elites (especially President Obama) who favor subordinate groups through affirmative action and are unfairly undermined by subordinate groups, such as in competing for jobs.

Tea Party supporters perceive themselves (i.e., White, older, Christian, predominantly male) in the middle of the line and acknowledge "many in the back of the line are people of color" (Hochschild 2016; p. 136), though expressing skepticism about the relative group deprivation (Berry et al 2020) claimed by subordinate groups. Supporters suspect that the deprivation complained about must not be severe if President Obama–who reached one of the highest positions possible in the country–and other subordinates have been able to achieve substantial success. Thus, supporters feel discriminated against by the federal government and alienated from "their own land." Moreover, while supporters were once able to motivate themselves to continue patiently waiting in line by enhancing esteem through qualities such as Christian morality, regional identity (i.e., "Southerner") and their heterosexuality, they now perceive themselves as culturally marginalized by liberals in a new, hostile social landscape (see Cepuran and Berry 2022 for an argument that status threats indicate to whites that their racial identity is no longer a viable option to enhance esteem). Now, supporters perceive discrimination from slurs such as "redneck," "white trash," or "Bible-thumper;" reasoning that if they cannot use the "n-word," liberals should not be able to use the "r-word" (i.e., redneck). It is these experiences of alienation and betrayal that motivated support for Donald Trump in his 2016 presidential candidacy, with whom they emotionally resonated: Trump championed them in their deep story.

Like the previous authors, Cramer (2016) explores a similar puzzle: given increasing economic inequality, why have White low-income voters' preferences for government redistribution moved in a conservative direction? However, Cramer focuses on a rural-urban divide and distinguishes her work from Frank (2004) by explaining that rural residents, grounded in a "rural identity"–a place-based social identity, intertwine economic issues and perceptions of "who is getting what and who deserves it" (p. 7) to create political meaning. The rural identity emerges from perceptions that rural residents are distinct from urbanites in terms of lifestyles, values, and work ethic. Through this lens, rural consciousness denotes a "multifaceted resentment against cities" (p. 6) stemming from perceived discrimination in terms of distributive injustice, lack of representation, and cultural disrespect.

A politics of resentment, Cramer argues, emerges from the interaction between social identities, the emotion of resentment, and economic insecurity. In pursuing recourse, rural consciousness shapes political preferences and political engagement, motivating support for the Tea Party, the Republican governor, support for small government generally, and for Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential race. In terms of the divide, rural residents feel ignored by decision makers (including policy makers, which they perceive as urbanites), and that urbanites (especially, government and public employees) take their "hard-earned" money and unjustly

receive a disproportionate share of resources. Moreover, these residents perceive that they have fundamentally distinct values and lifestyles that are misunderstood and disrespected by urbanites. Similar to Frank (2004) and Hochschild (2016), Cramer observes this sense of marginalization is fostered by elites who exploit it as political capital.

Reasoning that, because many of her interviewees interpreted developments through identities rooted in place and class rather than partisan identity, Cramer claims that "partisanship can be part of a broader understanding of who one is in the world and a less meaningful identity than we often assume" (p. 6). Cramer references literature that explores whether opinions about redistribution are a function of social locations and social environments as opposed to economic considerations. She reasons that issues might be secondary to identities, that voters could focus on how similar the candidate is and whether the candidate understands people like the voter as opposed to closeness in ideological space.

Hypotheses

The framework developed in this project has implications on intergroup contact, intergroup conflict and perceptions of discrimination, partisan narrative content and their effects, as well as the social-psychological measurement of partisanship. Below I enumerate a non-exhaustive list of hypotheses.

Contact

Because groups tend to not mix (Punam and Campbell 2010; Dawson 1995; Kuhn 1962; Krupnikov and Ryan 2022; Byrne 1971; Pettigrew 1998):

H1: Partisans reporting less intergroup contact are more likely to rely on partisan narratives to explain intergroup relations

Political sophistication

Generally, the public relies on elite ingroup members, who have greater political sophistication, to clarify group threats (Lee 2008; Zepeda-Millan 2017; Cepuran and Berry 2022). Therefore:

H2: Individuals that exhibit higher levels of political sophistication are less likely to rely on partisan narratives to explain intergroup relations

Narrative content and effects

Because subordinate groups tend to not view other subordinate groups as perpetrators of discrimination (Major and Dover 2016), discrimination is prototyped as an intergroup phenomenon (Inman and Baron 1996; Rodin et al 1990), and because parties cultivate ingroup bias:

H3a: Partisan narratives are less likely to reflect societal beliefs with content on discrimination between co-partisan outgroups

H3b: Partisan narratives are more likely to reflect societal beliefs with content on discrimination involving opponent outgroups

H4a: Individuals relying on partisan narratives to higher degrees are more likely evaluate co-partisan outgroups positively

H4b: Individuals relying on partisan narratives to higher degrees are less likely to evaluate opponent outgroups positively

H5a: Subscription to partisan narratives increases perception of discrimination against co-partisan outgroups

H5b: Subscription to partisan narratives decreases perception of discrimination against opponent outgroups

H6: Subscription to partisan narratives increases policy support for co-partisan outgroups, such as African Americans supporting Latinos and Asians on immigration and Whites supporting Christians on religion in government

Narrative complexity

Because parties in a two-party system function as broad, cross-cutting umbrellas:

H7: As the social heterogeneity of party coalitions increases–such as in the Democratic Party, partisans narratives require more abstract narratives to remain inclusive

H8: Partisan narratives in two-party systems are more likely to exhibit broader and convergent coalition narratives than multi-party systems

Party identification

Because research finds subordinate group members prefer dual categorization (Moss 2017, Gaertner and Dovidio 2000) and a decentralized power structure (Smith and King 2024):

H9: Subordinate group member higher in subgroup identification strength are more likely to prefer dual categorization

H10: Subordinate group members higher in group consciousness or linked fate are more likely to prefer dual recategorization

Conclusion

In two-party systems, the dominant parties must differentiate themselves and align and coordinate heterogeneous social groups to be politically viable. Each group has different histories, status, needs, and chronic conditions they seek to improve or fulfill. Moreover, groups tend to be implicated in cleavages with opponents in which there are perceptual disputes over discrimination. Conflicts become intractable because the Constitutional allocation of power and two-party nature of the system foster perpetual conflict, discourage compromise, and encourage escalation of conflict. In this project, I present a conceptual framework for studying the psychological structure of partisanship as well as how parties help identifiers adapt to conflict through narrative, focusing on hierarchy orientation and perceptions of discrimination. The dominant approach to partisanship views it as an enduring identity but rejects social identity theory. I build on the dominant approach by submitting the argument that partisanship is not just a social identity but a superordinate identity. Party culture and narratives are emergent features of coalitions, driven by interactions between identifiers and party elites (e.g., politicians, public opinion leaders in the media) in intractable conflicts. I contribute to literature on sorting and polarization that views these interactions as endogenous rather than strictly bottom-up or top-down (O'Brian 2024). Parties exert disproportionate influence on public opinion and elites clarify threats for group members, such as those involving discrimination, but identifiers bring group interests elites must navigate.

Hierarchy orientation shapes the social and psychological structures of partisanship. When a party adopts a consistent liberal or conservative position on race, it signals to voters a cross-cutting front on hierarchy orientation through an especially divisive cleavage that creates path dependency in sorting (O'Brian 2004). Consequently, hierarchy orientation in a two-party system leads to party "mega-identities" in which social identities and their cleavages become increasingly associated with parties (Mason 2018)--hierarchy orientation enables sorting that leads to homogeneity on that front.

I maintain superordinate conceptualization of partisanship clarifies the psychological structure of partisanship can vary depending on party organizational culture. I argue the Democratic and Republican parties exhibit dual and single recategorization, respectively. The former challenges hierarchy and its organizational culture accordingly reflects decentralized organization; it allows identifiers to retain more salient subgroup identities (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation) while partisan identity functions as a common front under which all coordinate. In contrast, the latter seeks to maintain or enhance hierarchy and its organizational culture encourages deference to authority; it discourages individuality and encourages partisan identity exclusively.

Hierarchy orientation also enables parties to converge on broad yet meaningful narratives. I argue this cross-cutting front enables parties to address fundamental questions of whether they are repairing or protecting the system, who the culprits of problems are, and for partisans to converge on policy means. Perceptions of pervasive discrimination entail belief in widespread or systemic prejudice, so this framework suggests they are likely content for societal beliefs that comprise group and party narratives. Partisan narratives function as simplified representations of intergroup relations, including agreeable histories, collective emotional orientations to conflict, and futures partisans can collaborate towards. While the narratives help identifiers fulfill needs in

conflict, they contribute to polarization by creating priors that shape attitudes, beliefs, and schemas.

One of the major contributions of this framework is that it provides theoretical clarity on questions of the relative primacy of partisanship to other social identities. The literature reviewed here indicates that members of low-status groups tend to be motivated to process information through their lower-status social identities (e.g., Boyer et al 2022) and that they prefer dual categorization; in contrast, high-status groups tend to process information through their political identity (Boyer et al 2022) and prefer single recategorization. Hence, for Democrats, dual categorization allows more salient social identities (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) to dominate interests and esteem enhancement. In contrast, for the racially homogenous Republicans, single recategorization allows political identities (e.g., partisanship, ideology) to dominate. Thus, Republicans can sidestep diversity complications in race/ethnicity and religion, for example, and emphasize deference to authority and discourage individualism.

Other major theoretical implications include that partisanship is stable because psychological attachment leads to internalization of sociopsychological infrastructure and that this infrastructure contributes to polarization. I argue individuals rely on internalization of sociopsychological infrastructure–collective memory, ethos of conflict, and collective emotional orientations–to cope with stress and withstand rivals in prolonged political conflict. The infrastructure enables coherent narratives in which the self is portrayed positively. Therefore, given that the internalization of such infrastructure fulfills psychological needs in conflict (e.g., esteem-enhancement, fostering trust among copartisans), that internalization implies coherent interpretation over multiple facets of society (e.g., economy, culture, religion), and evidence that the infrastructures are robust to contradictory information; internalization implies that it is costly (e.g., in terms of dissonance, information processing) to change beliefs, emotions, and narratives related to conflict. This implies that partisanship and polarization are robust because of sociopsychological processes that follow psychological attachment.

Moreover, combined with the group-schematic approach to political cognition (Zhirkov and Valentino 2022), the dual process model of ingroup distinctiveness (Otten 2002) provides insights into the nature of social polarization and motivated reasoning. The theoretical combination of these two approaches implies that race-party schemas become interconnected in memory networks in relation to the self. When the self is intertwined with a race-party schema, the valence of association tends to be "warm;" in contrast, when the race-party schema is repeatedly primed as an outgroup to the self, the valence of association tends to be "cold." This interconnectedness has downstream implications on how claims of discrimination from ingroups and outgroups are perceived. If outgroups are within the ingroup race-party schema (i.e., co-partisan outgroups), then individuals are more likely to be receptive of of their discrimination claims; if outgroups are outside of the ingroup race-party schema (i.e., outgroups from the outparty), then their claims are more likely to be subject to motivated skepticism.

To empirically address the claims advanced here, future research must measure and test the superordinate structure of partisanship. Because hierarchy orientation is theorized to function as a common front that predisposes positive intragroup contact in partisan superordinate categories, research should, ideally, analyze several measures on these constructs jointly. On hierarchy

orientation, measures on social dominance orientation (SDO) capture individual preference for ingroup domination over outgroups (Pratto et al 1994) and perception of parties' hierarchy orientations (e.g., "do you believe the Democratic Party represents disadvantaged groups such as racial, religious, and sexual orientation minorities more than the Republican Party?") would capture the degree to which the public actually perceives these orientations. On contact, perceptions of intergroup contact tailored to party coalitions (i.e., equal status, intergroup contact with co-partisans, interdependence, and supportive norms; Gaertner et al 1994) would measure perceived contact conditions within parties (i.e., whether partisans and elites interact in top-down or bottom-up styles), and feeling thermometers on the same groups would assess levels of social distance influencing intergroup attitudes. On partisan identification, measures of superordinate identification (e.g., perception of party as one group, two groups, separate individuals, or whether all are "on the same team;" Gaertner et al 1994, p. 232-233) would offer empirical insights into the categorization structure of partisanship, while standard measures of partisanship would offer contrast in analyses. Moreover, standard measures of partisanship coupled with identification strength measures for subordinate and dominant groups (e.g., race/ethnicity, LGBTQ+, Muslim, White, male, Christian/Protestant, heterosexual) would offer insight into how these identities are correlated.

Furthermore, research should investigate partisan narratives across groups on the political left. Smith and King (2024) investigate narratives in racial institutional orders across both parties while Cramer (2016) and Hochschild (2016) investigate narratives within the Republican Party. Taken together, Smith and King (2024,) Cramer (2016), and Hochschild (2016), offer insights into the top-down and bottom-up formation of narratives on the right, which is more racially homogenous. Thus, there is a gap in knowledge on emergent narratives beyond race on the left, though Smith and King (2024) offer substantial insights into top-down racial narratives with a focus on African American elites. Because this project argues that parties coordinate partisans through narratives which explain intergroup relations, research should investigate whether perceptions of discrimination against various groups cohere like in the narratives theorized here. Lastly, research should also investigate the societal beliefs in partisan narratives that Bar-Tal (2007) indicates comprise the sociopsychological infrastructure developed in adapting to intractable conflict: collective emotional orientation, collective memory, and ethos of conflict. I suggest the infrastructure reveal antecedents of discrimination, such as prototypes.

On limitations: this framework was developed on the sociopsychology of a two-party system. In a two-party system, ideological space is bifurcated such that, to compete for voters, one party aligns with conservative interests whereas the other aligns with liberal interests (see O'Brian 2024 for an argument on sorting and path-dependency). As a result of these dynamics, each party must function as a large umbrella to capture a broader base of popular support than in multiparty systems, in which parties compete for voters in narrower slices of ideological space and liberal and conservative coalitions of parties emerge. Thus, different sociopsychological infrastructures are likely to emerge in multi-party systems. Moreover, in the American case, Cramer's (2016) work indicates that rural identity takes primacy over partisanship, which poses complications for the Republican culture of single recategorization. Rural identity is likely to take primacy over partisanship, because group identifiers perceive their group as relatively lower-status or marginalized, as Frank (2004) and Hochshild (2016) also observe.

References

Abramowitz, Alan, 2018. *The Great Alignment: Race, Party Transformation, and the Rise of Donald Trump*. Yale University Press.

Albertson, Bethany, and Shana Kushner Gadarian. 2015. *Anxious Politics: Democratic Citizenship in a Threatening World*. Cambridge University Press.

Allport, Gordon W., 1954. *The Nature of Prejudice*. Addison-Wesley.

Argote, Linda, and Andrew A. Kane. 2009. "Superordinate Identity and Knowledge Creation and Transfer in Organizations." In Knowledge Governance, p. 166–190.

Arrow, Kenneth J.. 1973. "The Theory of Discrimination." In Ashenfelter, O. and Rees, A. (Eds) Discrimination in Labor Markets. Princeton, Nj: Princeton University Press, p. 3–33.

Banks, Antoine J., and Marisa A. Bell. 2013. "Racialized Campaign Ads: The Emotional Content in Implicit Racial Appeals Primes White Racial Attitudes." *Public Opinion Quarterly,* 77(2), p. 549–560.

Banks, Antoine J., and Nicholas A. Valentino. 2012. "Emotional Substrates of White Racial Attitudes." *American Journal of Political Science,* 56(2), p. 286–297.

Bar-Tal, Daniel. 2007. "Sociopsychological Foundations of Intractable Conflicts." *American Behavioral Scientist,* 50(11), p. 1430–1453.

Barreto, Matt. 2010. *Ethnic Cues: The Role of Shared Ethnicity in Latino Political Participation*. University of Michigan Press.

Barreto, Matt A., and Francisco I. Pedraza. 2009. "The Renewal and Persistence of Group Identification in American Politics." *Electoral Studies,* 28(4), p. 595–605.

Bartels, Larry M. 2006. "What's the Matter With What's the Matter With Kansas?" *Quarterly Journal of Political Science,* 1(2), p. 201–226.

Becker, Gary S., 1957. *The Economics of Discrimination*. University of Chicago Press.

Beniger, James R. 1987. "Personalization of Mass Media and the Growth of Pseudo-Community." *Communication Research,* 14(3), 352–371.

Berry, Joseph A., Catalina Cepuran, and Sergio Garcia-Rios. 2020. "Relative Group Discrimination and Vote Choice Among Blacks, Latinos, Asians, and Whites." *Politics, Groups, and Identities,* 10(3), 410–429.

Blumer, Herbert. 1958. "Race Prejudice As a Sense of Group Position." *Pacific Sociological Review*, 1(1), 3–7.

Boyer, Ming M., Loes Aaldering, and Sophie Lecheler. 2022. "Motivated Reasoning In Identity Politics: Group Status As a Moderator of Political Motivations." *Political Studies,* 70(2), p. 385-401.

Branscombe, Nyla R., Michael T. Schmitt, and Richard D. Harvey. 1999. "Perceiving pervasive discrimination among African Americans: Implications for group identification and well-being." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77(1), p.135.

Byrne, Donn, Carolyn Gouaux, William Griffitt, John Lamberth, Natsuki B.P.M. Murakawa, M. Prasad, A. Prasad, and Manuel Ramirez Iii. 1971. "The Ubiquitous Relationship: Attitude Similarity and Attraction: A Cross-Cultural Study." *Human Relations,* 24(3), 201–207.

Bohren, J. Aislinn, Kareem Haggag, Alex Imas, and Devin G. Pope. 2023. "Inaccurate Statistical Discrimination: An Identification Problem." *Review of Economics and Statistics*, p. 1-45.

Campbell, Angus, Philip E. Converse, Warren E. Miller, and Donald E. Stokes. 1980. *The American Voter.* University of Chicago Press.

Cepuran, Colin J.G. and Justin Berry, 2022. "Whites' Racial Resentment and Perceived Relative Discrimination Interactively Predict Participation." *Political Behavior*, 44(2), p. 1003-1024.

Chong, Dennis, and Diane Kim. 2006. “The Experiences and Effects of Economic Status Among Racial and Ethnic Minorities.” *American Political Science Review,* 100(3), 335–351.
Cohen, M., Karol, D., Noel, H. and Zaller, J., 2009. *The Party Decides: Presidential Nominations Before and After Reform.* University of Chicago Press.
Conover, Pamela J. and Stanley Feldman. 1984. “How People Organize the Political World: A Schematic Model.” *American Journal of Political Science*, p. 95-126.
Cox, Karen L. 2019. *Dixie’s Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture*. University Press of Florida.
Cramer, Katherine J. 2016. *The Politics of Resentment: Rural Consciousness In Wisconsin and the Rise of Scott Walker*. University of Chicago Press.
Dalton, R.J., 2021. *The Good Citizen: How a Younger Generation is Reshaping American Politics*. CQ press.
Dawson, Michael C. 1995. *Behind the Mule: Race and Class In African-American Politics*. Princeton University Press.
Defilippis, Joseph N., Brian Anderson-Nathe, and Mara Brettschneider. 2017. “Embodying Margin To Center: Intersectional Activism Among Queer Liberation Organizations.” In Lgbtq Politics: A Critical Reader, 110–133.
Diehl, Michael. 1990. “The Minimal Group Paradigm: Theoretical Explanations and Empirical Findings.” *European Review of Social Psychology,* 1(1), 263–292.
Dover, Tayah L., Brenda Major, and Cheryl R. Kaiser. 2014. “Diversity Initiatives, Status, and System-Justifying Beliefs: When and How Diversity Efforts De-Legitimize Discrimination Claims.” *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations,* 17(4), 485–493.
Druckman, James N., Samara Klar, Yanna Krupnikov, Matthew Levendusky, and John B. Ryan. 2022. “(Mis) Estimating Affective Polarization.” *The Journal of Politics*, 84(2), p. 1106-1117.
Eyting, Markus. 2022. “Why Do We Discriminate? The Role of Motivated Reasoning” (No. 356). Safe Working Paper.
Feldman, Stanley. and Leonie Huddy. 2018. “Racially Motivated Reasoning.” In T*he Feeling, Thinking Citizen* (pp. 171-193). Routledge.
Fiorina, Morris P. and Samuel J. Abrams. 2008. “Political Polarization In the American Public.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 11(1), p. 563-588.
Frank, Thomas. 2004. *What’s the Matter With Kansas?: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America*. Metropolitan Books.
Freeman, Jo. 1986. “The Political Culture of the Democratic and Republican Parties.” *Political Science Quarterly,* 101(3), 327–356.
Gaertner, Samuel L., John F. Dovidio, Peter A. Anastasio, Betty A. Bachman, and Mary C. Rust. 1993. “The Common Ingroup Identity Model: Recategorization and the Reduction of Intergroup Bias.” *European Review of Social Psychology,* 4(1), 1–26.
Gaertner, Samuel L., Mary C. Rust, John F. Dovidio, Betty A. Bachman, Phylis A. Anastasio. 1994. “The contact hypothesis: The role of a common ingroup identity on reducing intergroup bias.” *Small group research*, 25(2), pp.224-249.
Gaertner, Samuel L., John F. Dovidio, Brenda S. Banker, Missy Houlette, Kelly M. Johnson, and Elizabeth A. McGlynn. 2000. “Reducing intergroup conflict: From superordinate goals to decategorization, recategorization, and mutual differentiation.” *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 4(1), p.98.

Garand, James C., Dan Qi, and Max Magaña. 2022. “Perceptions of Immigrant Threat, American Identity, and Vote Choice In the 2016 US Presidential Election.” *Political Behavior,* 44(2), 877–893.
Gillespie, Alex, and Flora Cornish. 2010. “Intersubjectivity: Towards a Dialogical Analysis.” *Journal For the Theory of Social Behaviour,* 40(1), 19–46.
Gimpel, J.G., Lovin, N., Moy, B. and Reeves, A., 2020. “The Urban–Rural Gulf In American Political Behavior.” *Political Behavior*, 42(4), p. 1343-1368.
Goel, S., Perelman, M., Shroff, R. and Sklansky, D.A., 2017. “Combatting Police Discrimination in the Age of Big Data.” *New Criminal Law Review*, 20(2), p. 181-232.
Graham, R., 2016. “Inter-Ideological Mingling: White Extremist Ideology Entering the Mainstream On Twitter.” *Sociological Spectrum*, 36(1), p. 24-36.
Green, Donald P., Bradley Palmquist, and Eric Schickler. 2002. *Partisan Hearts and Minds: Political Parties and the Social Identities of Voters*. Yale University Press.
Hackett, Ursula, 2025. “Rethinking America’s Racial Policy Alliances: Beyond `Repair` and `Protect`.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 48(13), p. 2586-2594.
Harris, Michael M., Filip Lievens, and Greet Van Hoye. 2004. “‘I Think They Discriminated Against Me’: Using Prototype Theory and Organizational Justice Theory For Understanding Perceived Discrimination In Selection and Promotion Situations.” *International Journal of Selection and Assessment,* 12(1–2), 54–65.
Hermans, Hubert J. 1996. “Voicing the Self: From Information Processing To Dialogical Interchange.” *Psychological Bulletin,* 119(1), 31.
Himelboim, Itai, Smith McCreery, and Marc A. Smith. 2013. “Birds of a Feather Tweet Together: Integrating Network and Content Analyses To Examine Cross-Ideology Exposure On Twitter.” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication,* 18(2), 154–174.
Himelboim, Itai, Marc A. Smith, Lee Rainie, Ben Shneiderman, and Camila Espina, 2017. “Classifying Twitter Topic-Networks Using Social Network Analysis.” *Social Media + Society*, 3(1), p.2056305117691545.
Hochschild, Arlie Russell. 2018. *Strangers In their Own Land: Anger and Mourning On the American Right*. The New Press.
Hooghe, Liesbet, and Gary Marks. 2018. “Cleavage Theory Meets Europe’s Crises: Lipset, Rokkan, and the Transnational Cleavage.” *Journal of European Public Policy,* 25(1), 109–135.
Inman, Mary L., and Robert S. Baron. 1996. “Influence of Prototypes On Perceptions of Prejudice.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 70(4), 727.
Iyengar, Shanto, Gaurav Sood, and Yphtach Lelkes. 2012. “Affect, Not Ideology: A Social Identity Perspective On Polarization.” *Public Opinion Quarterly,* 76(3), 405–431.
Iyengar, Shanto, Yphtach Lelkes, Matthew Levendusky, Neil Malhotra, and Sean J. Westwood. 2019. “The Origins and Consequences of Affective Polarization In the United States.” *Annual Review of Political Science*, 22(1), p. 129-146.
Iyengar, Shanto and Sean J. Westwood. 2015. “Fear and Loathing Across Party Lines: New Evidence On Group Polarization.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3), p. 690-707.
Jardina, Ashley. 2019. *White Identity Politics*. Cambridge University Press.
Jost, John T. 2019. “A Quarter Century of System Justification Theory: Questions, Answers, Criticisms, and Societal Applications.” *British Journal of Social Psychology,* 58(2), 263–314.
King, Desmond S. and Rogers M. Smith. 2005. “Racial Orders In American Political Development.” *American Political Science Review*, 99(1), 75-92

Klandermans, Pieter G., 2014. “Identity Politics and Politicized Identities: Identity Processes and the Dynamics of Protest." *Political psychology*, 35(1), pp.1-22.
Klinkner, Philip A., 1994. *The Losing Parties: Out-Party National Committees, 1956-1993*. Yale University Press.
Knippenberg, Ad Van, and Naomi Ellemers. 1990. Social Identity and Intergroup Differentiation Processes. *European Review of Social Psychology,* 1(1), 137–169.
Kriesberg, Louis, Terrell A. Northrup, and Stuart J. Thorson, Eds. 1998. *Intractable Conflicts and their Transformation*. Syracuse University Press.
Krupnikov, Yanna, and John Barry Ryan. 2022. *The Other Divide: Polarization and Disengagement In American Politics*. Cambridge University Press.
Kuhn, Thomas S. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. University of Chicago Press.
Lang, Kevin, and Ariella K. L. Spitzer. 2020. “Race Discrimination: An Economic Perspective.” *Journal of Economic Perspectives,* 34(2), 68–89.
Lazarsfeld, Paul F., Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet. 1968. *The People’s Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind In a Presidential Campaign*. Columbia University Press.
Lee, Taeku. 2008. “Race, Immigration, and the Identity-To-Politics Link.” *Annual Review of Political Science,* 11: 457–478.
Lee, Derrick L., and Susan Ahn. 2013. “The Relation of Racial Identity, Ethnic Identity, and Racial Socialization To Discrimination–Distress: A Meta-Analysis of Black Americans.” *Journal of Counseling Psychology,* 60(1), 1.
Lipset, Seymour Martin, and Stein Rokkan. 1967. *Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments*. Free Press.
Lodge, Milton, and Charles S. Taber. 2013. *The Rationalizing Voter*. Cambridge University Press.
Mackie, Diane M., Thierry Devos, and Eliot R. Smith. "Intergroup Emotions: Explaining Offensive Action Tendencies In An Intergroup Context." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 79, No. 4(2000), 602.
Mackie, Diane M., Eliot R. Smith, and David G. Ray. 2008. “Intergroup Emotions and Intergroup Relations.” *Social and Personality Psychology Compass,* 2(5), 1866–1880.
Macneilage, Peter F., and Barbara L. Davis. 2005. “The Evolution of Language.” In *The Handbook of Evolutionary Psychology*, 698–723. John Wiley & Sons.
Maitner, Angela T., Diane M. Mackie, Heather M. Claypool, and Richard J. Crisp. 2010. “Identity Salience Moderates Processing of Group-Relevant Information.” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 46(2), 441–444
Major, Brenda, Wendy J. Quinton, and Shannon K. McCoy. 2002. “Antecedents and Consequences of Attributions To Discrimination: Theoretical and Empirical Advances.” *Advances In Experimental Social Psychology, 34*: 251–330.
Major, Brenda, Alison Blodorn, and Gregory Major Blascovich. 2016. “The Threat of Increasing Diversity: Why Many White Americans Support Trump in the 2016 Presidential Election.” *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 21(6), pp.931-940.
Major, Brenda, and Tessa L. Dover. 2016. “Attributions To Discrimination: Antecedents and Consequences.” In *Handbook of Prejudice, Stereotyping, and Discrimination*, 2nd Ed. Taylor & Francis.
Mason, Lilliana. 2018. *Uncivil Agreement: How Politics Became Our Identity*. University of Chicago Press.
Masuoka, Natalie, and Jane Junn. 2013. *The Politics of Belonging: Race, Public Opinion, and Immigration*. University of Chicago Press.

Matsumoto, David, Mark G. Frank, and Hyisung C. Hwang. 2015. “The Role of Intergroup Emotions In Political Violence.” *Current Directions In Psychological Science*, 24(5), p. 369-373.
McConnell, Christopher, Yotam Margalit, Neil Malhotra, and Matthew Levendusky. 2018. “The Economic Consequences of Partisanship In a Polarized Era.” *American Journal of Political Science*, 62(1), p. 5-18.
McDaniel, Eric L. 2013. “The Black Church and Defining the Political.” *Politics, Groups, and Identitie*s, 1(1), p. 93-97.
Miller, Kimberly P., Marilynn B. Brewer, and N. Laird Arbuckle. 2009. “Social Identity Complexity: Its Correlates and Antecedents.” *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations,* 12(1), 79–94.
Mills, C.Wright. 2000. *The Sociological Imagination*. Oxford University Press.
Moss, Scott M. 2017. “Identity Hierarchy Within the Sudanese Superordinate Identity: Political Leadership Promoting and Demoting Subordinate Groups.” *Political Psychology,* 38(6), 925–942.
Murthy, Dhiraj, 2013. *Twitter: Social Communication in the Twitter Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
Napier, Jaime L., and John T. Jost. 2008. “Why Are Conservatives Happier Than Liberals?” *Psychological Science,* 19(6), 565–572.
Nasr, Mitchell. 2021. “The Motivated Electorate: Voter Uncertainty, Motivated Reasoning, and Ideological Congruence To Parties.” *Electoral Studies,* 72: 102344.
O'Brian, Neil A., 2024. *The Roots of Polarization: From the Racial Realignment To the Culture Wars*. University of Chicago Press.
Ortony, Andrew, Donald A. Norman, and William Revelle. 2005. The Role of Affect and Proto-Affect In Effective Functioning. In *Who Needs Emotions? The Brain Meets the Machine.* 173-202. Oxford University Press.
Onuchic, Paula. 2025. “Recent Contributions To Theories of Discrimination.” Arxiv Preprint Arxiv:2205.05994.
Otten, Sabine. 2002. “‘Me and Us’ Or ‘Us and them’? The Self As a Heuristic For Defining Minimal Ingroups.” *European Review of Social Psychology,* 13(1), 1–33.
Pettigrew, Thomas F. 1998. “Intergroup Contact Theory.” *Annual Review of Psychology,* 49(1), 65–85.
Pettigrew, Thomas F., Linda R. Tropp, Ulrich Wagner, and Oliver Christ. 2011. “Recent Advances In Intergroup Contact Theory.” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 35(3), p. 271-280.
Pew Research Center. 2018. “10. Political Engagement, Knowledge and the Midterms.” April 26. (https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2018/04/26/10-political-engagement-knowledge-and-the-midterms/)
Pew Research Center. 2021. “Deep Divisions In Americans’ Views of the Nation’s Racial History – and How To Address It.” Retrieved April 1, 2026. (https://Www.Pewresearch.Org/Politics/2021/08/12/Deep-Divisions-In-Americans-Views-of-Nations-Racial-History-and-How-To-Address-It/)
Phelps, Edmund S. 1972. “The Statistical Theory of Racism and Sexism.” *The American Economic Review*, 62(4), p. 659-661.
Pratto, F., Sidanius, J., Lisa M. Stallworth, and Bertram F. Malle, 1994. “Social Dominance Orientation: A Personality Variable Predicting Social and Political Attitudes.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67(4), p.741.
Pratto, F., Sidanius, J. and Levin, S., 2006. “Social Dominance Theory and the Dynamics of Intergroup Relations: Taking Stock and Looking Forward.” *European Review of Social Psychology*, 17(1), p. 271-320.

Putnam, Robert D. and David E. Campbell. 2010. *American Grace: How Religion Divides and Unites Us*. Simon and Schuster.
Rivest, Maxime P., Nancy Moreau, and Laurent Negura. 2017. "From Affirmed Privilege To Experiences of Discrimination: Majority Anglophones' Perceptions of Linguistic Majority-Minority Dynamics In Canada." *Canadian Ethnic Studies,* 49(1), 67–84.
Rodin, Marilyn J., Joan M. Price, Jeffrey B. Bryson, and F. J. Sanchez. 1990. "Asymmetry In Prejudice Attribution." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology,* 26(6), 481–504.
Roccas, Sonia, and Marilynn B. Brewer. 2002. "Social Identity Complexity." *Personality and Social Psychology Review,* 6(2), 88–106.
Sanchez, Gabriel R., and Edward D. Vargas. 2016. "Taking a Closer Look At Group Identity: The Link Between Theory and Measurement of Group Consciousness and Linked Fate." *Political Research Quarterly,* 69(1), 160–174.
Sawchuk, Stephen. 2021. "What Is Critical Race Theory, and Why Is It Under Attack? Educationweek." Retrieved April 1, 2026. (https://Www.Edweek.Org/Leadership/What-Is-Critical-Race-Theory-and-Why-Is-It-Under-Attack/2021/05)
Scheitle, Christopher P. and Michelle Hansmann. 2016. "Religion‐Related Hate Crimes: Data, Trends, and Limitations." *Journal For the Scientific Study of Religion*, 55(4), Pp.859-873.
Schildkraut, Deborah J.. 2005. "The Rise and Fall of Political Engagement Among Latinos: The Role of Identity and Perceptions of Discrimination." *Political Behavior,* 27: 285–312.
Schildkraut, Deborah J.. 2010. *Americanism In the Twenty-First Century: Public Opinion In the Age of Immigration*. Cambridge University Press.
Schmitt, Michael T., and Nyla R. Branscombe. 2002. "The Meaning and Consequences of Perceived Discrimination In Disadvantaged and Privileged Social Groups." *European Review of Social Psychology,* 12(1), 167–199.
Sidanius, Jim, and Felicia Pratto. 1999. "Social Dominance Theory." *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology*, 2.
Smith, Eliot R. 1993. "Social Identity and Social Emotions: Toward New Conceptualizations of Prejudice." In *Affect, Cognition and Stereotyping*, 297–315. Academic Press.
Smith, Kevin B., 2022. "Politics Is Making Us Sick: The Negative Impact of Political Engagement On Public Health During the Trump Administration." *Plos One*, 17(1), p.e0262022.
Smith, Rogers M., and Desmond King. 2024. *America's New Racial Battle Lines: Protect Versus Repair*. University of Chicago Press.
Smith, Rogers M., and Desmond King. 2025. "Rejoinder: America's New Racial Battle Lines and the Tragic Trump Triumph." *Ethnic and Racial Studies,* 48(13), p. 2617-2623.
Solomon, Johanna A., and Anna Martin. 2019. "Competitive Victimhood As a Lens To Reconciliation: An Analysis of the Black Lives Matter and Blue Lives Matter Movements." *Conflict Resolution Quarterly,* 37(1), 7–31.
Strickland, Avery A., Charles S. Taber, and Milton Lodge. 2011. "Motivated Reasoning and Public Opinion." *Journal of Health Politics*, Policy and Law 36(6), 935–944.
Stults, Christopher B., Sandra A. Kupprat, Kristen D. Krause, Farzana Kapadia, and Perry N. Halkitis. 2017. "Perceptions of Safety Among Lgbtq People Following the 2016 Pulse Nightclub Shooting." *Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity*, 4(3), p. 251-256.
Swim, Janet K., Laura L. Hyers, Lori L. Cohen, Daniel C. Fitzgerald, and William H. Bylsma. 2003. "African American College Students' Experiences With Everyday Racism: Characteristics of and Responses To these Incidents." *Journal of Black Psychology,* 29(1), 38–67.

Taber, Charles S., and Milton Lodge. 2006. “Motivated Skepticism In the Evaluation of Political Beliefs.” *American Journal of Political Science,* 50(3), 755–769.
Tajfel, Henri. 1970. “Experiments In Intergroup Discrimination.” *Scientific American,* 223(5), 96–103.
Tajfel, Henri, MG. Billig, R.P Bundy, and Claude Flament. 1971. “Social Categorization and Intergroup Behaviour.” *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 1(2), p. 149-178.
Tajfel, Henri. and John C. Turner. 1979. “The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior.” In *Political Psychology*. 276-293. Psychology Press.
Tate, Katherine. 1994. *From Protest To Politics: The New Black Voters In American Elections*. Harvard University Press.
Valentino, Nicholas A., Ted Brader, Elizabeth W. Groenendyk, Kristin Gregorowicz, and Vincent L. Hutchings. 2011. “Election Night’s Alright For Fighting: The Role of Emotions In Political Participation.” *Journal of Politics,* 73(1), 156–170.
Wells, H.G., 1927. *The New Machiavelli*. Duffield & Company.
Wilkinson, Betina C. 2015. *Partners Or Rivals?: Power and Latino, Black, and White Relations In the Twenty-First Century*. University of Virginia Press.
Wolf, Michael R., J. Cherie Strachan, and Daniel M. Shea. 2012. “Forget the Good of the Game: Political Incivility and Lack of Compromise As a Second Layer of Party Polarization.” *American Behavioral Scientist*, 56(12), p. 1677-1695.
Wyer, Robert S. Jr., Rashmi Adaval, and Stanley J. Colcombe. 2002. “Narrative-Based Representations of Social Knowledge: Their Construction and Use In Comprehension, Memory, and Judgment.” In *Advances In Experimental Social Psychology,* 34: 131–197.
Yoo, Hyung Chol, and Richard M. Lee. 2008. “Does Ethnic Identity Buffer Or Exacerbate the Effects of Frequent Racial Discrimination On Situational Well-Being of Asian Americans?” *Journal of Counseling Psychology,* 55(1), 63.
Young, Isaac F., and Daniel Sullivan. 2016. “Competitive Victimhood: A Review of the Theoretical and Empirical Literature.” *Current Opinion In Psychology,* 11: 30–34.
Zepeda-Millán, Chris. 2017. *Latino Mass Mobilization: Immigration, Racialization, and Activism*. Cambridge University Press.
Zhirkov, K. and Valentino, N.A., 2022. “The Origins and Consequences of Racialized Schemas About Us Parties.” *Journal of Race, Ethnicity, and Politics*, 7(3), p. 484-504.