

PARSING OUT PERSPECTIVE TAKING: PATTERNS IN
NARRATIVE STRATEGIES AND THEIR IMPACT ON
SOCIAL RELATIONS

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Psychology
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Science

June 2019

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Kathryn Haynes for the degree of Bachelor of Science
in the Department of Psychology to be taken June 2019

Title: Parsing Out Perspective Taking: Patterns in Narrative Strategies and their
Impact on Social Relations

Approved: _____

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Perspective taking is often regarded as a tool to improve social relations, but it can sometimes “backfire,” leading to negative outcomes (e.g., increased stereotyping). Past research has examined the effect of instructing people to take another person’s perspective (or not) on various outcomes, but has focused less on the strategies people might employ when doing such perspective taking. To better understand what causes this “backfiring,” we asked participants to write about the typical day of an out-group target (i.e., someone who supported the opposing candidate in the 2016 U.S. presidential election) and then answer questions about social outcomes in relation to the target (e.g., how much they liked the target, willingness to engage in conversation with the target, and validity of the target’s position). Participants’ narratives were coded for the point of view they were written in (i.e., first-person, embedded/marked, third-person, and no point of view), the concentration of stereotypes for each political group (i.e., liberal and conservative), and average valence (i.e., negative to positive) of content. Third-person point of view was hypothesized and found to be the most commonly chosen point of view, but first-person was hypothesized to have the most

positivity and the least stereotyping, however this hypothesis was not supported. Separate multiple regressions conducted found that smaller concentrations of stereotypes and more positive valence generally predicted better social outcomes. Liberal participants generally exhibiting greater negative perceptions of out-group relations, which could be potentially explained by bitterness over the liberal loss in the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Altogether, the findings show the need for deeper understanding of the natural strategies people employ when perspective taking before perspective taking can be used to foster a more consistently effective intergroup intervention.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to acknowledge my thesis committee. I thank Professor Sara Hodges for her continuous guidance during the thesis process. Her knowledge and expertise in psychological research helped me to create a more successful thesis. I would like to thank GTF Kathryn Denning for her mentorship throughout my research experience. I have looked to her as a role model, and deeply appreciate her dedication and support in my thesis journey. I also thank Professor Nicole Dudukovic for her thoughtful contributions from a different domain in psychology, which helped me create a more well-rounded thesis.

Additionally, I would like to thank my parents Lori and John Haynes, who always motivate me and are there whenever I need them. I would not be where I am or who I am today without them. I would also like to thank Jordan Blackburn for her friendship, advice, and the other countless ways in which she supported me during my college years. Finally, I am grateful to Clinton Riley for his continuous love and support throughout this thesis venture.

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Introduction

“How could you have voted for that candidate?” “I don’t understand how you could support that politician.” These often-echoed political sentiments appear to illustrate that a lack of understanding across political lines may be at the heart of the current political divide in the U.S. Thus, although we are taught from a young age to “treat others as we want to be treated” and to “put ourselves in others’ shoes” to resolve conflict, these lessons seem to have all but disappeared in our current political landscape. Instead, it seems that people are relying more on stereotypes – often negative – of their political out-group (Pew Research Center, 2016). It is possible that people have become reliant on political stereotypes because political opponents are seen as so fundamentally different from themselves that it is nearly impossible to try to imagine “oneself in their shoes.”

Why does it seem so difficult for people to consider the perspective of their political out-group? Examining strategies that people naturally use while perspective taking may provide answers as to why sometimes it is difficult, and even hurtful, to put themselves “in someone else’s shoes.” How much participants insert themselves into the target’s perspective, or how stereotypically they view the target while attempting to take their perspective could explain the inconsistent social outcomes in perspective taking research. Understanding the past work done in this field of research is essential to addressing these questions.

Perspective Taking

Perspective taking is an active cognitive process in which people attempt to understand another person's thoughts, motivations, intentions, and emotions by imagining the world from that person's unique point of view (Ku, Wang, & Galinsky, 2015). This could be as visceral as flinching when you see someone fall or as purposeful as being quiet in the morning to avoid waking one's roommate who had a late shift at work the night before. Colloquially, being told to "put yourself in someone else's shoes" is a popular conflict resolution tactic that utilizes perspective taking. However, there is conflicting evidence in the perspective taking literature as to whether perspective taking is *always* effective at improving social relations (e.g., improved positive attitudes and reduced stereotyping; Ku, Wang, & Galinsky, 2010; Todd, Bodenhausen, & Galinsky, 2012; Todd, Bodenhausen, Richeson, & Galinsky, 2011) or whether it can sometimes backfire, worsening relations (Nario-Redmond, Gospodinov, & Cobb, 2017; Pierce, Kilduff, Galinsky, & Sivanathan, 2013; Sassenrath, Hodges, & Pfattheicher, 2016; Tarrant, Calitri, & Weston, 2012). Examining strategies people might naturally employ when perspective taking, such as the narrative point of view participants use to consider another's perspective and the amount of stereotyping referenced *during* perspective taking, may provide further explanation about when perspective taking works as a social relations tool and when it becomes a hindrance.

Impact of Perspective Taking on Intergroup Relations

Numerous studies have found that perspective taking is effective at reducing stereotyping and prejudice (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Ku et al., 2010), as well as promoting empathy (Batson, Early, & Salvarani, 1997) and positive attitudes (Berthold,

Leicht, Methner, & Gaum, 2013) towards out-group members. Other research has directly tied perspective taking to intergroup relations, finding that perspective taking decreases the amount people deny that discrimination is prevalent against certain communities (Todd et al., 2012), the extent people favor their own in-group (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000), and the number of automatic expressions of racial bias they exhibit (Todd et al., 2011). These findings appear to support the anecdotal view that “putting yourself in another’s shoes” will resolve interpersonal and intergroup conflict, helping people more successfully navigate a diverse social world.

However, recent research has questioned the efficacy of perspective taking on improving intergroup relations, finding there are certain situations in which asking people to consider another person’s perspective results in more negative behaviors and attitudes toward the target (for review, see Sassenrath et al., 2016). For instance, researchers found that in competitive contexts, perspective taking can yield lower trust and increased unethical behavior towards the target (e.g., lying or cheating to win; Pierce et al., 2013). Additionally, perspective taking increased negative attitudes towards out-group targets when perceivers felt highly connected to their own in-groups (Tarrant et al., 2012), when the target embodied something morally threatening to the perceiver (e.g., a conservative perceiver thinking about a gay male couple; Mooijman & Stern, 2016), and when people may feel vulnerable about becoming similar to the target (e.g. becoming disabled; Nario-Redmond et al., 2017). Further, when the target individual exhibits stereotype-consistent behaviors (e.g., a bedridden elder in a hospital), as opposed to stereotype-ambiguous behaviors (e.g., an elder simply sitting on a bench), people are more likely to endorse stereotypes after taking the perspective of

that target (Skorinko & Sinclair, 2013). Thus, it appears that situational and contextual factors may impact whether perspective taking succeeds or fails in helping intergroup relations. However, some studies have found even less support for the effectiveness of perspective taking as a whole.

Another group of findings that undermine the efficacy of perspective taking as a social tool have found that perspective taking simply has *no effect*, neither positive nor negative, on social outcomes. For instance, a variety of studies have not found a main effect of perspective taking on stereotype reduction (Skorinko & Sinclair, 2013; Sun, Zuo, Wu, & Wen, 2016), and others only find significant effects of perspective taking in interaction with another variable (e.g., self-esteem or in-group identification; Galinsky & Ku, 2004; Tarrant et al., 2012). These inconsistent results within the field of social psychology as to when perspective taking works – and if it even has an effect at all – speaks to the need to more closely study the potential mechanisms naturally deployed when people engage in perspective taking. As such, an important research question is determining the underlying factors that cause perspective taking to have an effect on social relations – either helpful or harmful. One potential moderator is the point of view (e.g., either narrating an account of perspective taking in first-person or third-person when asked to write about it) that people naturally choose to use when they are asked to perspective take.

Inconsistent Manipulations and Point of View

Another inconsistent aspect of perspective taking research is the methods used to manipulate perspective taking. Specifically, a commonly used perspective taking procedure asks the participant to write about a typical day in the life of a target

individual, who is previously shown to the participants in a photograph and described in a varying amount of detail (e.g., no additional details, a list of demographic details, or a vignette about the target; Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Ku et al., 2010). Not only do the number of target details vary across studies, but the manipulation instructing participants how to take the target's perspective also differs tremendously. Sometimes participants are given instructions to either imagine what they, the participant, would be thinking or feeling as though *they* were the person in the photograph, (i.e., imagine-self condition), or they are asked to imagine what the person in the photograph is thinking and feeling, separate from themselves, (i.e., imagine-other; Batson et al. 1997; Vorauer & Sasaki, 2014). These instructions have been found to have different impacts on social outcomes, which will be explicitly addressed later. To further complicate matters, researchers also vary how they operationalize a control condition, with some instructing control participants to remain objective (e.g., avoid considering the target's perspective) when writing about the "day in the life" of the target and others simply not providing additional instructions besides the general directions of "write about a day in the target's life" (Galinsky, Wang, & Ku, 2008). Recent research examining the difference between the two controls suggests that the "objective" control instructions are driving the effect of perspective taking by *suppressing* perspective taking, while the true control condition with no extra information does not differ from the perspective taking condition (McAuliffe, Forster, Philippe, & McCullough, 2018).

Due to this variation in methods and subsequent results, it seems another way to assess perspective taking may not necessarily be reliance on manipulating it, but rather seeing if there are observable patterns of differences when people are asked to "put

themselves in another person's shoes." For example, one factor that research on perspective taking has mostly ignored would be to assess whether the point of view subjects choose to write from when perspective taking (e.g., first-person or third-person) explains variance in subsequent social outcomes, such as decreased stereotyping or increased positive social outcomes with the target. In addition to third-person point of view, an embedded point of view during perspective taking (i.e. "I think they will...", where the "I" refers to the perspective taker, and the "they" refers to the target of perspective taking) might distance the participant from the target and lead to worse social outcomes. Theories of how people explain behavior say that marked attributions (i.e., statements using mental state markers, e.g., "*she liked* the show" versus "the show *was* fun") create statements that seem more subjective and uncertain, while unmarked attributions (i.e., no mental state markers) can sound more like facts (Malle, 1999). Embedded point of view would thus be an example of such a marked statement when perspective taking (e.g., "*I think* they wake up..."), that may indicate more uncertainty than first-person point of view (e.g., "I wake up...").

Third-person point of view may act as a way to more fully depersonalize the perspective taking narrative and distance the perspective taker from the perspective taking target, because depersonalization – a form of mental distancing – has been found to increase negative stereotypes (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 2002). Embedded, or marked, point of view therefore may act as a softer form of mental distancing, in that participants are somewhat allowing for their own subjectivity of the target's actions to shine through. As such, first-person point of view may provide a more self-involved approach to perspective taking than third-person and embedded points of view, similar

to the distinction between imagine-self and imagine-other conditions. Imagine-self perspective taking requires participants to draw on their own self-identity to imagine the life of another person, and by choosing to write from a first-person point of view, participants may be unconsciously, or actively, choosing to use their own self-knowledge to inform their understanding of the target.

While written point of view is not a direct measure of imagine-self versus imagine-other perspective taking, these manipulations in perspective taking (i.e., imagine-self versus imagine-other) provide an example as to how the language used in perspective taking could impact social outcomes after perspective taking. Actively using first-person point of view while perspective taking may involve participants putting themselves “in the shoes” of the target to a greater extent. As participants directly write as though they are the target, this may create greater proximity between the participant’s and the target’s perceived mental state. When someone sees a person fall down, a mental response of, “ouch, that looked like it must have hurt!” could have a very different outcome than a response of, “ouch, I remember the last time I fell, that definitely hurt!”

Past research has manipulated the condition of imagine-self versus imagine-other perspective taking, with pivotal findings showing that people in the imagine-other condition exhibit less prejudice reduction than people in the imagine-self and control conditions, both of which did not significantly differ from one another (Vorauer & Sasaki, 2014). These researchers found that imagine-other perspective taking instructions resulted in people thinking about the stereotypes associated with their own group, leading perspective taking to backfire – i.e., it hindered prejudice reduction. The

researchers speculate this as happening due to increased in-group defensiveness, e.g. thinking about how others view one's in-group may foster negative feelings towards those anticipated to think negatively of the in-group. The results in support of the effectiveness of imagine-self perspective taking are also inconsistent, with imagine-self perspective taking being associated with increased self-other overlap (Myers, Laurent, & Hodges, 2014) and empathy, but also increased distress in comparison to imagine-other perspective taking (Batson et al., 1997). However, all of these studies manipulated perspective taking and did not examine the different ways that people may choose to take another person's perspective naturally.

Perspective taking has been associated with increased self-other overlap, or how much a person feels similar and connected to another (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Todd et al., 2012). As such, when someone chooses to narrate a perspective-taking attempt in first-person point of view, this may unconsciously increase their self-other overlap, similar to how research has found that imagine-self perspective taking results in increased self-other overlap (Myers et al., 2014). However, we don't know the direction of causality, and it could also be true that participants who already experience a greater self-other overlap with the target may in turn choose to use first-person point of view, or that a third variable – for example, the group membership (e.g., in-group or out-group) of the target may affect both the use of first-person point of view and self-other overlap. The difference between imagine-self and imagine-other perspective taking can be compared to the difference between first-person and third-person point of view in that imagine-self perspective taking is contingent upon participants using the self as a reference when perspective taking.

Interestingly, past literature has shown that the more similar participants perceive the target to be to them, the more effective perspective taking is at reducing bias and increasing positive attitudes (Davis et al., 1996; Todd et al. 2012). Therefore, it may be more natural for participants to use first-person perspective when they feel similar to the target (i.e. the target is their in-group member). However, if participants choose to write about a “day in the life” of an out-group member using a first-person perspective, this could activate greater self-other overlap and result in more positive attitudes towards the target. This makes research on the point of view that participants *choose* to take when perspective taking an important variable to examine.

Point of view could help provide insight into why perspective taking fails in certain situations, as knowing the extent to which people “speak” as if they are the target person may be indicative of how successfully they were able to “put themselves in the shoes” of the other person. For instance, in research where people stereotyped *more* after perspective taking (e.g., Skorinko & Sinclair, 2013), it would be interesting to know the extent to which people wrote as though they were the target person, which point of view could inform. Moreover, if people were unable to get “into” the head of another person, then this could seriously impact the effectiveness of perspective taking. By not fully immersing themselves into imagining the perspective of someone else, participants may not reap the benefits of perspective taking. Point of view could help capture how closely people are immersing themselves within the narratives through word choice and narrative structure.

Perspective Taking and Politics

As mentioned earlier, perspective taking has been found to fail in competitive contexts, resulting in increased willingness to engage in unethical behavior towards the target group (Pierce et al., 2013). With politics and political campaigns being competitive by nature (e.g., involving winners and losers), it is important to know whether perspective taking results in increased negative outcomes in political intergroup interactions. Additionally, whether there are natural patterns in how people take the perspective of their political out-group could explain why perspective taking might not be as effective in competitive contexts, politics included.

A recent study looked at political intergroup relations and perspective taking, finding that perspective taking increased self-knowledge activation (i.e., when a person uses knowledge about themselves to infer the state of others) and perceived similarity (i.e., how similar a person sees themselves) to the target (Todd, Simpson, & Tamir, 2016). However, there are some possible methodological concerns in Todd and colleagues' study that need to be addressed in order to better understand the role perspective taking plays in political intergroup relations. First, in their perspective taking manipulation, the perspective-taking instructions for participants did not differentiate between imagining themselves as the target (i.e., imagine-self) and imagining the target separately (i.e., imagine-other). Instead, participants were told to take the perspective of the target, specifically to “visualize clearly and vividly what [he or she] might be thinking and feeling” (i.e., instructions more closely resembling imagine-other; Todd et al., 2016). This is notable because the research was designed specifically to study the effect of perspective taking on the amount of self-knowledge

used when inferring the mindset of the target. Imagine-self perspective taking has been shown to increase self-other overlap and, as such, may potentially activate self-knowledge used in perspective taking (Myers et al., 2014). Yet, Todd et al.'s study did not attempt to examine any differences between imagine-self and imagine-other instructions, despite the researchers being directly interested in how much people used their own identity in trying to understand the target.

A second limitation was that Todd and colleagues operationalized self-knowledge activation – how much participants were using their own mental state as a basis for their mental state inferences of the target – by the proportion of first-person singular nouns written in the participant's "day in the life" narrative. This measure is problematic and possibly misleading because it fails to incorporate the context of the rest of the sentence when analyzing pronoun use. For example, simply using more first-person pronouns does not necessarily indicate greater self-other overlap if participants are using "I" in an embedded, or marked, manner (e.g., "*I think* that the target was..."), as this could actually indicate greater mental distancing and uncertainty. This distinction is important as employing first-person narration when perspective taking seems to facilitate more active imagination of the target individual's perspective, thus putting participants in closer approximation to the target's own mental state, as opposed to the increased distancing that may result from an embedded, or marked, perspective. Consequently, Todd and colleagues' operationalization of self-knowledge activation by measuring use of first-person pronouns may not be a valid. Moreover, Todd and colleagues' results may not apply to all contexts, as their data were collected shortly before the 2016 U.S presidential election and the unfavorable and polarized attitudes

each political side harbors towards the other may have significantly increased since this recent, and highly contentious, election (Pew Research Center, 2016).

For perspective taking to reduce political polarization, it would necessary to manipulate it in a way that does not worsen the divide between the two sides. However, the best way to do this is currently unknown due to the contradictory results and variability in how perspective taking has been manipulated in past research. In order to fill in the gaps left in understanding the effect of perspective taking on political intergroup relations specifically (e.g., stereotyping; Todd et al., 2016) and social relations more broadly (e.g., prejudice reduction and out-group liking; Sassenrath et al., 2016), we need to thoroughly explore how people take someone's perspective (i.e., write their "day in the life" narratives). For instance, measuring point of view may provide better insight as to how people choose to perspective take differently depending on the target's political group membership in relation to their own (e.g., use more first-person pronouns for in-group targets as opposed to out-group targets), as it allows for possible examination of the proximity participants create between their own mental state and the mental states they perceive the target to have. Further, if the Todd et al. (2016) hypothesis that increased use of self-knowledge reduces stereotyping is true, then the amount of stereotyping used by participants in crafting narratives may be impacted by how much participants are placing themselves within the narrative as well (i.e. point of view). Increased stereotyping may follow this mental distancing, as people might be using stereotypes instead of their own mental states when they narratively distance themselves away from the target.

Stereotyping and Point of View

As we have noted, stereotype reduction used to be uniformly associated with positive social outcomes. As previously stated, perspective taking has been found to be effective at least some of the time at reducing stereotyping and improving attitudes towards out-group targets (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Ku et al., 2010) as well as reducing racial bias (Todd et al., 2011; Todd et al., 2012). However, how exactly stereotyping is measured also varies across studies. For example, one study defined stereotyping as how much participants embodied the stereotypes of the target group in their own behavior (i.e., walking slower after taking the perspective of the elderly; Experiment 3, Ku et al., 2010). Other variations include measuring change in how people perceived other groups after perspective taking (e.g., participants thinking the disabled were less competent after simulating the experience of a disabled person, Silverman, Gwinn, & Van Boven, 2015) and measuring how many stereotypic traits a participant ascribed to the target group (Skorinko & Sinclair, 2013).

Past research hasn't frequently looked at the valence of the narrative in conjunction with the amount of stereotyping present, i.e., how positive or negative the content of the perspective taking narrative is and how that changes participants' perception of and behavior towards the target. For example, elders can be stereotyped in either benevolent or neutral terms - i.e., "cute and docile" - or in more negative terms - i.e., "slow and highly dependent." While both are still stereotyping, the more benevolent ones may not be as problematic for others' perceptions of and attitudes towards older people as the more negative stereotypes could be. Galinsky and Moskowitz (2000) measured the overall stereotypicality (using a 9-point rating scale

from “not at all” to “extremely” stereotypical) and valence (i.e., negative to positive) of participants’ “day in the life” narratives that they wrote during a perspective taking task. However, the researchers looked at these variables as outcomes, predicted by manipulated conditions of perspective taking, as opposed to examining how participants’ use of stereotyping and valence *during* perspective taking affected other social outcomes. Examining overall stereotypic content and valence as predictors within these narratives may be the best strategy for measuring the natural ways people employ stereotypes in everyday social interactions and their subsequent impact on those social interactions, as this strategy focuses on what people naturally do when attempting to take the perspective of someone else.

Some research has suggested that stereotyping may actually help accuracy in understanding what others are thinking and feeling, specifically new mothers in one case (Lewis et al., 2012). Although stereotyping is generally considered negative, sometimes stereotypes can be accurate (Madon et al., 1998). Even within politics, while liberals and conservatives exaggerate the differences between the two parties, the political stereotypes they use still mirror actual differences between the two groups (Scherer, Windschitl, & Graham, 2015). Thus, people highly stereotyping another group, but not being explicitly negative in their description, may be using such stereotyping as a strategy to more accurately understand a group of which they are not a part of. However, not all stereotypes within politics are accurate, and some may be both inaccurate and highly negative in how people wield them (e.g., the belief that all conservatives want women to be entirely subservient to men or that all liberals hate Christianity and want to destroy Christmas). Additionally, political opponents have

been found to see their own political aggression as motivated by love but see their political out-group members' aggression as motivated by hate (Waytz, Young, & Ginges, 2014). In fact, one of the most polarizing aspects between conservatives and liberals is how each side feels about their opponents, with both sides seeing the other side's control of the political sphere as threatening their own perception of the nation's well-being (Pew Research Center, 2014). The two political parties clearly struggle to relate to one another; both conservatives and liberals stereotype the other party as being the ignorant ones, while they view their own in-group as truly intelligent (Rothschild, Howat, Shafranek, & Busby, 2018).

This "us versus them" mentality in politics feeds into the idea of out-group homogeneity: people view members of their out-group as all being the same, and this effect has been shown specifically in competitive contexts (Judd & Park, 1988). Stereotypes may help foster this out-group homogeneity – they provide an easy definition as to what the "other" looks, acts, and sounds like. Thus, stereotypes in a competitive arena like politics may be especially salient in defining what the "other" group stands for. In this sense, stereotypes may be a critical piece of information people employ to infer the mindset of their political out-group when perspective taking. The amount of stereotyping used could in part predict the social outcomes of perspective taking in politics, in that perhaps stereotyping may stir up more negative feelings towards the other side. Furthermore, the extent to which people actively participate in politics has been found to result in people attributing more negative stereotypes to political opponents (e.g., greater political identification creates more out-group

stereotyping; Pew Research Center, 2016). As such, greater out-group stereotyping from political partisans could consequently lead to worsened social outcomes.

Narrative point of view may interact with stereotype use, such that the use of first-person point of view may be helpful on its own, but when combined with high stereotype use, there may be an increase in more negative social outcomes. This possibility is consistent with past research that found that perspective taking backfires when targets are seen as more stereotypical (Skorinko & Sinclair, 2012) and consequently possibly threatening to the participant's in-group (Mooijman & Stern, 2016). Thus, examining how the narrative point of view people chose to use when perspective taking may relate to stereotyping is a crucial direction to be explored, as it provides a potential new measure of how, and how much, people put themselves in someone else's shoes and how this measure may interact with stereotyping differently than previously inconsistent perspective taking manipulations.

The Present Study

The present study will build upon previous findings, such as Tarrant et al. (2012) and Sassenrath et al. (2016), by examining whether the narrative strategies people chose to use during perspective taking may explain the inconsistent results – both positive and negative – that perspective taking has on social outcomes and intergroup relations. We will explore these narrative strategies in the context of political intergroup relations, something that has only been studied in relation to perspective taking in a limited capacity. The specific narrative strategies we will be examining will include the point of view the participant chooses to write (i.e. first-person, embedded/marked, third-person, or no point of view) from after being prompted to

perspective take, the average valence (i.e., negative to positive) of the content in the participants' perspective taking narratives, and the concentration of stereotypes for each political group (i.e., liberal and conservative) that participants use. We will also be examining how these strategies are moderated by the participant's political in-group. The outcomes of interest are participants' perceptions of five markers of social behaviors with the target (i.e., willingness to have a political discussion with the target, rating of target's contentiousness, how well they think the target would treat them, validity of the target's position, and how much they like target). The main research aims are to determine (1) the point of view people most often naturally choose to use when perspective taking, (2) patterns in the concentration of stereotyping and average narrative valence based on the point of view people choose to take, (3) whether the concentration of stereotyping and average narrative valence during perspective taking predict potential social outcomes.

In regards to our first aim, we predict that most people will choose to use third-person point of view when perspective taking an out-group member, as they may experience decreased self-other overlap with someone they disagree with politically. In answering our second aim, we predict that people who do choose to use first-person point of view during perspective taking will in turn use the smallest amounts of stereotyping within their narratives, while those who choose to use third-person will use more stereotyping to describe the target. Additionally, we predict that people who choose to use first-person point of view will use increased positive narrative valence (i.e., write more positively) when describing the target, compared to the other three types of point of view (i.e., third-person, embedded, or no point of view). Due to the

exploratory nature of these analyses, we will examine these questions using frequencies and means rather than inferential tests.

In order to address our third aim, we developed our own stereotyping coding scheme (discussed below). Using this coding scheme, we will first conduct analyses on how the use of various political stereotypes may be predicted by the target's candidate preference (e.g., do liberals use more conservative stereotypes in comparison to liberal stereotypes when writing about a conservative target?) in order to examine the content validity of our coding scheme. Specifically, we will examine the extent that the target's candidate preference predicts the participant's use of liberal versus conservative stereotypes in the narratives by conducting linear regressions with candidate preference of the target predicting the concentration of liberal and conservative stereotype content. We expect that people will use more stereotypes about their out-group, rather than their in-group, when describing a target also from their out-group (i.e., liberals will use more conservative stereotypes to describe a conservative target, and vice versa).

Following these preliminary analyses, we will examine how the average narrative valence, candidate preference of the target, and the concentration of liberal versus conservative stereotypes in the perspective taking narratives interact to predict our five potential social behaviors with the target. To examine this, a series of mixed model linear regressions will be conducted to predict each of our five social potential social outcomes by the concentration of liberal stereotypes used, concentration of conservative stereotypes used, average valence used in the perspective taking narratives as predictors, as well as the target's candidate preference. We will examine these predictors both in a model with a composite score for positive social outcomes, formed

by combining five social behavior items, as well as in five models which predict each of these social behaviors individually (discussed below in our methods).

We predict a main effect of target candidate preference on concentration of liberal and conservative stereotypes. When the perspective taking target is described as a Clinton-supporter, participants' narratives will contain a greater concentration of liberal stereotypes. For Trump-supporting targets, participants' narratives will contain a greater concentration of conservative stereotypes. We also predict a two-way interaction between narrative valence and target candidate preference. When the perspective taking target is a Trump-supporter and participants write more negative narratives, social behaviors will be more negative compared to when the target is a Clinton-supporter. We predict this interaction because participants who supported Trump "won" the 2016 presidential election and we thought they would harbor less resentment towards their out-group as compared to participants who supported the losing candidate (i.e., Clinton). We predict another two-way interaction of candidate preference and conservative stereotype use, such that when taking the perspective of a Trump-supporter target, participants who use a greater concentration of conservative stereotypes in their writing will report less-positive responses on the social outcome measures, relative to participants taking the perspective of a Clinton-supporter. Similarly, we also predict a two-way interaction of candidate preference and liberal stereotype use, such that when taking the perspective of a Clinton-supporter target, participants who use a greater concentration of liberal stereotypes in their writing will report less positive responses on the social outcome measures, relative to participants who take the perspective of a Trump-supporter.

Method

This study analyzes a subsection of a larger dataset that was collected in November 2016, immediately following the 2016 U.S. presidential election. Participants for the study were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk, an online crowd-sourcing website, and paid \$0.50 for their participation. For the overall experiment, a total of 810 participants were recruited; however, 22 participants were removed for failing to write about the “day in the life” of the target and another 35 participants were removed for failing the manipulation check (described in the procedure).

Roughly half of these participants were assigned to take the perspective of a member of their political out-group, while the remaining participants took the perspective of an in-group member. In this study, only the data from participants who took an out-group member’s perspective will be analyzed. Thus, the final sample had 367 participants. Of the people who responded, 234 were females, 129 males, 3 identified as other, and one person did not respond. Participants were predominantly (76.5%) Caucasian; the rest of the sample was 8.3% Black, 4.8% Latino/a, 4.3% Asian, and 4.3% Multiracial, with all other categories accounting for < 1%.

Procedure

All instructions and materials were provided to participants using Qualtrics, an online survey platform. In order to indicate their candidate preference for the 2016 U.S. presidential election, participants were asked to respond to the following question, “Of the following two candidates who ran in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, please

select the candidate that you preferred to win. If you did not or could not vote, please select the candidate you most preferred. We realize there were other candidates, but we want to know your preference between just these two candidates.” This answer was used to determine the participant’s political out-group (i.e., people who voted for the other major candidate in the 2016 U.S. presidential election), and thus how the out-group target was described in the manipulation (e.g., a self-reported Trump supporter would be paired with a target labeled as a Clinton supporter).

Regardless of the candidate preference described to the target, all participants were then shown the same picture of the target who they were told was named Jen, a white woman in her early 30’s (selected from a face database developed by Minear & Park, 2004). The target was a middle-aged white woman due to the fact that this demographic group was approximately equally divided in candidate preference during the 2016 U.S. presidential election (Bump, 2016). As noted earlier, only participants who were randomly assigned a political out-group target are included in this study’s analyses.

Participants then completed a questionnaire about moral beliefs (the Moral Foundation Questionnaire, abbreviated as MFQ), first for themselves, and then for the typical Trump and Clinton supporter. At the end of the study, they completed the MFQ for the target. However, data from the MFQ was not used in the current project.

Participants were asked to write about a “day in the life” of Jen, the target, using instructions from a frequently cited perspective taking manipulation (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000) that also was employed in Todd and colleagues’ (2016) study on perspective taking and politics. Participants were randomly assigned to either a

perspective taking or control condition. In the perspective taking condition, participants were told, “As you’re writing, we ask you to take her perspective. In your mind’s eye, visualize clearly and vividly what she might be thinking and feeling, what her intentions and goals are” (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000, p. 711). In the control condition, participants were not given any additional instructions beyond being asked to write about a day in Jen’s life. Participants also completed a manipulation check asking how much they took the perspective of the target on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 = *a great deal* and 5 = *not at all*. In the overall dataset, participants in the perspective taking condition ($M = 2.38, SD = 1.16$) unexpectedly reported significantly *less* perspective taking than people in the control condition ($M = 2.74, SD = 1.20$), $b = -0.36, t(22, 498) = -23.19, p < .001$ (it had been anticipated the difference would be in the opposite direction). However, because both groups (perspective taking and control conditions) reported mean perspective taking scores near the middle of the five-point scale, we used this as justification to collapse across the conditions and examine point of view as a different method “of putting yourself in someone else’s shoes.”

Participants then responded to five questions about their perceptions of the target, Jen, and potential social behaviors towards her. These five questions make up the potential social behavior outcomes (described below). Following data collection, the “day in the life” responses were coded for point of view, the concentration of political stereotypes used, and narrative valence (also described below). Participants’ written “day in the life” narratives were separated into units (each sentence was a unit), in order to weight features in the narrative by the total volume of content (i.e., number of total sentences in each given narrative).

Measures

Point of view. Novel coding schemes were developed to code the “day in the life” narratives. In order to assess the point of view taken in each narrative, participants’ written responses were coded as using either first-person point of view (e.g., “I woke up...”), third-person point of view (e.g., “Jen wakes up...”), embedded point of view (e.g., “I think Jen wakes up...”), or no point of view when the narrative was absent of pronouns or verbs that could indicate one of the other points of view (e.g., the participant just wrote “sadness” or “bad”). This coding was based on the voice each participant used throughout their entire written narrative (not for each unit of the narrative), rather than the simple presence of a first-person pronoun anywhere in the narrative. Such a method was used in order to provide a more holistic picture of how participants were narrating during perspective taking. Importantly, this measure was not manipulated by the researchers, but rather participants were grouped post-experiment based on how they chose to write when taking the perspective of the target; this in turn had implications for our analyses, which will be discussed in the results.

Three coders were trained to read the written narratives and code the point of view used throughout each narrative for either no point of view (0), first-person (1), embedded/marked (2), or third-person point of view (3). The first author coded the entirety of the narratives, after achieving reliability (92% interrater agreement) with two additional coders on a subset of the coding.

Concentration of Political Stereotypes. The second novel coding scheme measured the presence of conservative or liberal political stereotypes used in writing the narrative about the target’s “day in the life.” This coding drew on previous work

(Rothschild, Howat, Shafranek, & Busby, 2018) that compiled the most frequently reported stereotypes for each political party using an open-response format, taken from three different sample groups. In addition, the researchers for the present study included additional prevalent stereotypes that were not part of Rothschild et al.'s (2018) work.

A list of six stereotypes for each political party was determined. Liberal stereotypes were “lazy”, “overly sensitive snowflake”, “environmentalist”, “education elitist”, “social justice warrior”, and “close-minded liberal.” Conservative stereotypes were “racist”, “religious”, “gun-supporter”, “favor traditional gender roles”, “economic elitist”, and “close-minded conservative.” Stereotypes could also be reverse coded for counter stereotypes, such that a sentiment of “anti-gun supporter” would be coded as a liberal stereotype, and “anti-social justice warrior” would be coded as a conservative stereotype. Examples of the stereotypes used in narratives can be found in Appendix A.

Three coders were trained to read the written narratives and code whether each stereotype – either conservative or liberal – was present in the narrative (1 or -1, in the case of counter stereotypes) or not (0); see Appendix A. The first author coded the entirety of the narratives, after achieving reliability (80-100% interrater agreement) with two additional coders on a subset of the coding.

The concentration of stereotypes relevant to each political group (i.e., both liberal and conservative) for each narrative were then calculated by summing the number of codes given to each respective group of stereotypes within the narrative, divided by the number of total units (i.e., sentences) within the narrative. This was done so that we could differentiate between, for example, narratives that used the same number of stereotypes, but varied drastically in length. In this example, shorter

narratives would thus contain more stereotypic content in relation to the overall volume of content.

Valence of narratives. Our final novel coding scheme was used to determine the average valence of participants' written narratives. This was used to assess how positive or negative participants were, based on their language choice, when attempting to describe a day in the target's life. Three coders were trained to code the narrative for the valence of the writing. Each narrative unit (i.e., sentence) was assessed for how positive or negative the writing was on a 3-point scale with -1 being negative (e.g., "She seethes with hatred at anyone who isn't like her."), 0 being neutral (e.g., "She gets up and gets going for the day."), and +1 being positive (e.g., "She is happy, and she is respected.").

The first author coded the entirety of the narratives, after achieving reliability (82% interrater agreement) with two additional coders on a subset of the coding. In our analyses, we used the average of these valence scores across every participant's narrative (i.e., the average of all units in a single narrative of how negative to positive their writing was) centered around the grand mean.

Potential social behavior. To measure social outcomes, we used a five-item questionnaire that was included as an exploratory measure in the larger study from which the data were drawn. These items asked about the potential behaviors the participants would anticipate were they to meet the target in real life. The items were: "How willing would you be to discuss your political views with this target?" (i.e., willingness to discuss), "How contentious do you think a conversation about your political views would be with this target?" (i.e., target contentiousness), "How well do

you think the target would treat you during this conversation?” (i.e., treatment by target), “How valid do you think the target’s political position is?” (i.e., validity), and “How much do you like the target?” (i.e., liking). Participants responded to each item on a scale of 1 to 5, with anchors that were specific to the question (e.g., for “how much do you like the target?” 1 = *dislike a great deal*, 5 = *like a great deal*). High numbers indicated more positive outcomes, except for the contentiousness item, where high numbers indicated greater contentiousness, and thus a more negative outcome.

In an attempt to collapse the five individual social behavior outcomes into a cohesive scale, we reverse scored target contentiousness and conducted a Cronbach’s alpha test to measure the scale’s reliability. The five social outcome items showed some promise of inter-item reliability ($\alpha = 0.71$) to be grouped together as a single mean score. However, because the alpha wasn’t higher, and also because we were interested in whether the individual social behaviors might be affected differently by our predictor variables, we decided to analyze them separately as well.

As such, in addition to a model using the composite positive social outcomes, each of the five social behavior items was assessed individually as an outcome in subsequent analyses in order to more closely examine specific effects of average narrative valence (i.e., negative to positive), concentration of political stereotyping (i.e., both liberal and conservative), and candidate preference (i.e., Trump or Clinton) on potential social interactions with the participants’ out-group.

However, in order to account for the possibility of Type I errors in running six regression models, we adjusted the significance for each model, according to the Bonferroni correction equation ($\alpha / n = 0.05/6$) which set our overall significance level

for each of the models at .0083. This will be further discussed for each of the models in the results. See Table 1 for the means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation matrix of the five social outcome items.

Results

Patterns in Point of View Choice

Out of the sample of 367 participants, a majority (79.5%) of participants naturally wrote from a third-person point of view, 8.4% of participants chose to use an embedded/marked point of view, while 6.3% of participants chose to use first-person point of view, and only 5.7% of participants used no point of view. Due to the lopsided distribution of point of view choice, we decided not to run any analyses using inferential statistics using point of view choice as a variable. Instead, we examined patterns in the means for each point of view group for the average narrative valence of the writing (i.e., negative to positive) and the concentration of political group stereotypes used (i.e., liberal and conservative).

Candidate Descriptives. In addition to the narrative strategies previously identified, we also examined whether the narratives differed according to the participant's candidate preference between Donald Trump (0) and Hilary Clinton (1). Overall, of those who responded, more participants said they supported Clinton in the 2016 U.S presidential election ($N = 227$) than participants who said they supported Trump ($N = 138$). Of the participants who said that they preferred Trump, a majority (77.7%) chose to write from a third-person point of view, 11.5% chose to use an embedded/marked point of view, 7.2% chose to use no point of view, and only 3.6% chose to use first-person point of view. Of the participants who said that they preferred Clinton, again a majority (80%) chose to write from a third-person point of view, while 8.9% chose to use a first-person point of view, 6.3% chose to use an embedded/marked

point of view, and only 4.7% chose to use no point of view. Thus, the distribution across the four points of view looks quite similar regardless of participants' political leanings.

Valence Descriptives. We examined the mean narrative valence for each point of view that participants may have chosen to write their narratives from (i.e., first-person, embedded, third-person, or no point of view). A +1.0 would be entirely positive writing and -1.0 would be entirely negative. Participants who chose to write from a first-person point of view had an average narrative valence of 0.04, which was close to the 0 neutral point. Contrary to predictions, participants who chose to write from a third-person point of view were on average the most positive in their writing ($M = 0.07$). Participants who chose to write using an embedded/marked point of view ($M = -0.03$) and from no point of view ($M = -0.11$) both had on average more negative valence, but all means were close to the 0 neutral point. As noted earlier, because of the lopsided point of view group sizes, we not only chose not to run significance tests on the means, but also chose not to use point of view as a factor in our later analyses.

Concentration of Liberal and Conservative Stereotypes. We found the average concentration of liberal stereotypes used for each of the possible points of view that participants may have chosen to write from. The range of scores that participants actually had for concentration of liberal stereotypes went from -1.0, indicating that participants used as many counter-stereotypes for liberals as the number of sentences that they wrote, to +2.0, indicating that participants used twice as many stereotypes for liberals as the number of sentences that they wrote ($M = 0.13$, $SD = 0.38$). On average, participants who chose to write from *no point of view* had the highest concentrations of

liberal stereotypes used ($M = 0.21$), followed by participants who chose to use third-person point of view ($M = 0.15$), then those who chose to use an embedded/marked point of view ($M = 0.06$), while participants who chose to write from a first-person point of view had the lowest concentrations of liberal stereotypes used ($M = 0.01$).

Similarly, we found the average concentration of conservative stereotypes also ranged from -1.0, indicating that participants used as many counter-stereotypes for conservatives as the number of sentences that they wrote, to +2.0, indicating that participants used twice as many stereotypes for conservatives as the number of sentences that they wrote ($M = 0.30$, $SD = 0.59$). However, participants who chose to write from *first-person* point of view had the highest concentrations of conservative stereotypes used ($M = 0.43$), followed by participants who chose to use third-person point of view ($M = 0.32$), then those who chose to use an embedded/marked point of view ($M = 0.20$), while participants who chose to write from no point of view had the lowest concentrations of conservative stereotypes ($M = 0.05$).

Concentration of Stereotypes Predicting Social Outcomes

To determine whether the concentration of liberal or conservative stereotypes within the narratives was consistent with the target's political identity, simple linear regressions were conducted predicting concentration of stereotypes for each political group (i.e., liberal and conservative) by candidate preference of the target (i.e., Trump and Clinton). The concentration of **conservative** stereotypes used in the writing was significantly higher for targets identified as Trump supporters ($M = 0.53$), compared to targets identified as Clinton supporters ($M = -0.09$), $b = 0.62$, $t(373) = 11.30$, $p < .001$, 95%CI [0.51, 0.72]. Similarly, the concentration of **liberal** stereotypes used in the

writing was higher when the target was a Clinton supporter ($M = 0.39$) compared to when the target was a Trump supporter ($M = -0.02$), $b = -0.47$, $t(373) = -11.40$, $p < .001$, 95%CI [-0.47, -0.33].

Positive Social Outcomes. Using an adjusted cut-off alpha level of .0083 to account for family-wise error for the six models we ran, the model predicting the composite positive social outcomes variable was significant, $F(15, 359) = 8.21$, $R^2 = 0.26$, $p < .001$. When predicting the overall model of combined social outcomes, the main effect for concentration of liberal stereotypes was significant $b = -0.58$, $t(359) = -3.74$, $p = 0.017$, 95%CI [-1.06, -0.10]. Specifically, as the concentration of liberal stereotypes increased, potential positive social outcomes towards the target decreased. The main effect of the target's candidate preference (i.e., Trump or Clinton) on positive social outcomes was also significant, $b = -0.61$, $t(359) = -2.39$, $p < 0.001$, 95%CI [-0.94, -0.29]. When the target was a Trump supporter, positive social outcomes decreased ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 0.10$) compared to when the target was a Clinton supporter ($M = 4.15$, $SD = 0.13$).

The two-way interaction between average narrative valence and target's candidate preference was significant, $b = 0.65$, $t(359) = 2.05$, $p = 0.041$, 95%CI [0.03, 1.27]. Specifically, positive social outcomes increased for both groups as average narrative valence became more positive. However, this effect was much more pronounced when the target was a Trump supporter. That is, when the target supported Trump, the positive slope for positive social outcomes was steeper as average narrative valence moved from negative to positive, compared to when the target supported Clinton (Figure 1). No other main effects or interactions were significant ($ps > .1$).

As discussed earlier, we decided also to look at whether the five social behavior outcomes were impacted differentially by our predictors. Multiple linear regressions were conducted predicting each of these five social behavior items by both concentrations of liberal and conservative stereotypes, average narrative valence (i.e., negative to positive), and target's candidate preference (i.e., Trump or Clinton).

Willingness to Discuss. Using an adjusted cut-off alpha level of .0083 to account for family-wise error for the six models we ran, the model predicting willingness to discuss was not significant, $F(15, 359) = 1.37, R^2 = 0.05, p = .16$. When predicting willingness to have a discussion with the target, no main effects or interactions were significant ($ps > .1$).

Treatment by Target. Using an adjusted cut-off alpha level of .0083 to account for family-wise error for the six models we ran, the model predicting treatment by target was significant, $F(15, 359) = 7.00, R^2 = 0.23, p < .001$. When predicting how well participants thought they would be treated by the target, the main effect for average narrative valence (i.e., negative to positive) was significant, $b = 1.08, t(359) = 2.69, p = .008, 95\%CI [0.29, 1.88]$. Specifically, as participants wrote more positive narratives, how well participants thought the target would treat them increased. No other main effects or interactions were significant ($ps > .1$).

Validity. Using an adjusted cut-off alpha level of .0083 to account for family-wise error for the six models we ran, the model predicting validity was significant, $F(15, 359) = 6.23, R^2 = 0.21, p < .001$. When predicting participants' rating of the validity of the target's political position, there was a significant main effect of concentration of liberal stereotypes, $b = -1.07, t(359) = -2.80, p = .005, 95\%CI [-1.82,$

-0.32]. Specifically, as the concentration of liberal stereotypes increased, participants thought the target's position was less valid. The main effect of target's candidate preference (i.e., Trump or Clinton) on validity was also significant, $b = -0.96$, $t(359) = -3.72$, $p < .001$, 95%CI [-1.46, -0.45]. Participants thought Trump supporters had less valid positions ($M = 3.46$, $SD = 0.16$) than Clinton supporters ($M = 4.28$, $SD = 0.23$). No other main effects or interactions were significant ($ps > .1$).

Liking. Using an adjusted cut-off alpha level of .0083 to account for family-wise error for the six models we ran, the model predicting liking was significant, $F(15, 359) = 7.87$, $R^2 = 0.22$, $p < .001$. The main effect of average narrative valence (i.e., negative to positive) on how much participants said they liked the target was significant, $b = 0.87$, $t(359) = 2.62$, $p = .009$, 95%CI [0.22, 1.52]. As participants wrote more positive narratives, their reported liking of the target increased. In addition, the main effect of target's preferred candidate (i.e., Trump or Clinton) was also significant, $b = -0.50$, $t(359) = -2.48$, $p = .014$, 95%CI [-0.90, -0.10]. When the target was a Trump supporter, liking decreased ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 0.13$), compared to when the target was a Clinton supporter target ($M = 4.07$, $SD = 0.18$). No other main effects or interactions were significant ($ps > .1$).

Target Contentiousness. Using an adjusted cut-off alpha level of .0083 to account for family-wise error for the six models we ran, the model predicting target contentiousness (non-reversed) was significant, $F(15, 359) = 3.33$, $R^2 = 0.12$, $p < .001$. There were multiple predictors of how contentious participants perceived a discussion with the target would be. The main effect of average narrative valence (i.e., negative to positive) on how contentious the target was perceived to be was significant, $b = 0.98$,

$t(359) = 2.36, p = .019, 95\%CI [0.16, 1.80]$. Interestingly, as the narrative became more positive, how contentious the participants thought the target would be increased (our speculations about this curious result will be addressed in the discussion). The main effect of concentration of liberal stereotypes on how contentious the target was perceived to be was also significant, $b = 0.92, t(359) = 2.44, p = .015, 95\%CI [0.18, 1.66]$. As concentration of liberal stereotypes in the narrative increased, how contentious the participants thought the target would be also increased. In addition, there was a main effect of candidate preference (i.e., Trump or Clinton) on how contentiousness the target was perceived to be, $b = 1.04, t(359) = 4.08, p < .001, 95\%CI [0.54, 1.54]$. When the target was a Trump supporter, participants thought a conversation with the target would be more contentious ($M = 4.89, SD = 0.16$) than when the target was a Clinton supporter ($M = 3.94, SD = 0.22$).

A two-way interaction between average narrative valence and target's candidate preference was significant, $b = -1.65, t(359) = -3.36, p < .001, 95\%CI [-2.61, -0.68]$. Specifically, when the target was a Trump supporter, as average narrative valence of the writing became more positive, perceived contentiousness of the target decreased; conversely, when the target was a Clinton supporter, perceived contentiousness actually increased as valence became more positive (Figure 2). There was also a significant two-way interaction between average narrative valence and concentration of liberal stereotypes, $b = -1.48, t(359) = -2.50, p = .013, 95\%CI [-2.64, -0.31]$. Specifically, when people used a higher concentration of liberal stereotypes in their narratives, the more positive their average narrative valence was, the less contentious participants thought the target would be; conversely, when people used a lower concentration of

liberal stereotypes, the more positive their average narrative valence was, the *more* contentious the target was perceived to be (Figure 3). No other main effects or interactions were significant ($ps > .1$).

Discussion

This project set out to examine what people naturally do when taking the perspective of someone from their out-group, and how that might impact how they perceive possible social interactions they would have with that out-group member. We developed novel coding schemes in order to more closely understand what people do *during* perspective taking, examining the point of view people write from (i.e., third-person, first-person, embedded/marked, or no point of view), the concentration of stereotypes used (i.e., liberal and conservative) while perspective taking, and the overall valence (i.e., negative to positive) of the narratives written. These new coding schemes were also examined in order to see if they were moderated by which candidate the target was said to prefer in the 2016 U.S. presidential election (i.e., Trump or Clinton).

Due to the exploratory nature of the research questions and because participants in this study wrote naturally when perspective taking, there were unequal numbers of participants taking the various points of view, which we defined and coded after data collection. Thus, we decided not to run significance tests on any analyses that used point of view as a factor in our analyses.

It is also important to reiterate that we collapsed the data from participants who were assigned to the perspective taking condition (using the instructions from Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000) and the control condition, due to the fact that the perspective taking condition yielded *lower* numbers in terms of how much participants reported taking the target's perspective, and also due to the fact that average reported perspective taking in both conditions was around the midpoint of the scale. We think these means are indicative that perspective taking can be a natural part of human behavior, even

without explicit instructions to perspective take. This is why we highlight the necessity of examining the specific narrative strategies people naturally choose to use during perspective taking, such as the point of view they use when writing.

Patterns in natural point of view choice

Our results demonstrate that there seem to be natural preferences in how people write about someone from their out-group. As predicted, participants overwhelmingly chose to write from a third-person perspective (79%), more than any of the other points of view (i.e., first-person, embedded/marked, or no point of view). A possible explanation of this unequal distribution could be due to the context of taking the perspective of a political out-group member. People may have found it easier and more comfortable to keep some mental distance between themselves and the target by using third-person point of view, as they were instructed to imagine the perspective of one of their political opponents after a contentious presidential election. Past research found that “imagine-self” perspective taking instructions are associated with increased self-other overlap (Myers et al., 2014). Imagine-self perspective taking could be analogous to using a first-person point of view, in that imagine-self perspective taking hinges on participants using their own self-identity to structure their understanding of the situation. First-person point of view may be related to participants unconsciously feeling greater self-other overlap with the target. Additionally, perspective taking has been found to “backfire” when people highly identified with their own in-group are imagining an out-group member (Tarrant et al., 2012). Our speculation is that it may have been easier and more common for participants to use third-person (analogous to “imagine-other” perspective taking) during the present study because it lessened any

discomfort they may have felt attempting to take the perspective of their political out-group, with whom they may have struggled to feel much self-other overlap.

In line with our predictions, people who chose to use a first-person point of view on average wrote more positively in their descriptions of their out-group member than people who used the increasingly distanced embedded/marked point of view or who used no point of view at all. However, unexpectedly, people who chose to use third-person point of view wrote the most positive narratives. Again, we speculate that people who chose to use third-person point of view generally were the most positive because they felt more comfortable with the mental distance they had from the out-group target. Similarly, people who used no point of view may have been the most negative out of the four groups because they may not have felt any connection with the target.

Although we could not assess whether the differences in the prevalence of each point of view choice were significant due to the unequal distribution of choices, looking at the means is still valuable to see which natural tendencies people had. However, before researchers attempt to manipulate the point of view people use when perspective-taking as an intervention to improve social outcomes, an important future direction is first to examine whether manipulating people's use of first versus third-person point of view produces the same results as allowing people to choose their own point of view. Additionally, it would be useful to examine how people naturally use point of view to perspective take in other out-group contexts besides political intergroup relations, as well as how people may use point of view when taking the perspective of someone in their in-group. For example, people might actually feel more comfortable using first-

person point of view when taking the perspective of an in-group member, because they presumably feel more similar towards someone who identifies the same as they do.

Potential social behaviors differentially impacted by stereotyping

We had thought that stereotyping during perspective taking might play an important role in people's perceptions of how positive social interactions with someone from their out-group would be, as decreased stereotyping is generally seen to be a positive social outcome (Galinsky & Moskowitz, 2000; Ku et al., 2010). To better understand the role stereotyping played, we created a variable of the concentration of stereotyping within each narrative, to capture how much people used stereotypes relevant to the two political groups (i.e., liberal and conservative) in describing the targets, and then corrected for the overall volume of content participants wrote. As political stereotypes in particular often appear to be negative, we felt it was important to explore how narrative valence (i.e., negative to positive) and target's candidate preference (i.e., Trump or Clinton) might be related to stereotyping content (e.g., we thought liberals, the "losers" in the 2016 presidential election, may have been more negative and more stereotypic in describing a day in the life of a conservative).

Indeed, we found that the target's candidate preference for either Trump or Clinton, which was yoked to – and the inverse of – the participant's preference, could predict whether concentrations of stereotypic content in the perspective-taking narratives would be liberal or conservative. In other words, people used more liberal stereotypes when writing about a Clinton supporter and used more conservative stereotypes when writing about a Trump supporter. This result provided us with some verification for the validity of our stereotypes coding scheme.

When we looked at the composite model for positive social outcomes, we saw some effects. Positive social outcomes decreased with increased concentration of liberal stereotypes and with the target being a Trump supporter. We expected the latter effect as increased stereotyping has generally been thought of as a negative social outcome, and we had reasoned that liberal participants who were taking the perspective of a Trump supporter might feel increased resentment because of their recent political loss. Additionally, we found that as participants (both liberals writing about a Trump supporter and conservatives writing about a Clinton supporter) wrote more negative narratives, predicted social outcomes worsened. Interestingly, this effect of narrative valence was more dramatic for liberal participants writing about a Trump supporter, in that liberals using more negative writing predicted significantly worse social outcomes than conservative participants who used more negative writing.

One speculation for this was that liberal participants who wrote about a Trump supporter may have been even more unlikely to view the target in a positive light when they wrote very negatively because they were fixated on their recent political loss. Thus, liberals who chose to write more positively may have been more willing to come to an understanding towards Trump supporters and not outright dismiss the possibility of positive social interactions. That being said, we were still unsure as to what could have driven such an interaction, and further research would need to be conducted to verify this result as it may have simply been spurious. Therefore, we looked to our other analyses that broke down by each of the five social behavior items individually to provide more nuance.

When looking at whether the five potential social behaviors were impacted differently by concentration of stereotypes (i.e., liberal and conservative), narrative valence (i.e., negative to positive), and target's candidate preference (i.e., Trump or Clinton), distinct patterns emerged. As expected, when people wrote more positive narratives, they perceived that specific social interactions with someone from their out-group would be more positive (i.e., they thought the target would treat them better and they had increased liking of the target). Surprisingly, there was an unexpected effect for the average narrative valence (i.e., negative to positive) on how contentious participants thought a discussion with the member of their out-group would be. The main effect of narrative valence found that as the narratives were written more positively, the perceived contentiousness of the target also increased. We speculate that this could stem from the fact that whenever the target was mentioned as being "happy" or other such positive attributions, the narratives were counted as positively valenced, but the participants may have been describing how the target was happy about something that they disagreed with her on. Thus, participants may have described the target as being happy to be part of the party that they were told she identified with, but participants still viewed that party as something anathema to their own beliefs (e.g., conservative participants describing the target as happy to support Clinton in her bid for the first female presidency, or liberal participants describing the target as proud of the country for officially electing Trump as the president).

Overall, we found that liberal and conservative participants differed in what predicted the social outcomes with their political out-group. As expected, liberal participants (i.e., those who took the perspective of a target who supported Trump)

thought the target's political position was less valid and liked the target less, relative to how conservative participants felt about a target who supported Clinton. On the other side, narratives that were made up of more liberal stereotypes (which we found to be associated with writing about a target who supported Clinton, i.e., a conservative participant) resulted in feeling the target's political position was less valid and that the target would be more contentious. These different patterns for liberals and conservatives were also consistent with the patterns found predicting the composite model of positive social outcomes. Thus, we speculate that for liberal participants, the target simply being a Trump supporter was enough to decrease expectations of positive social behaviors. However, for conservative participants, expectations of decreased positive social behaviors only occurred when accompanied by more out-group stereotypes of a Clinton supporter. This may have been because, in terms of the 2016 U.S. presidential election, liberals were the "losers" in the most basic sense, and as such may have been more likely to feel resentment towards conservatives (i.e., Trump supporters). In contrast, conservatives may not have had this immediate dislike of Clinton supporters (because Trump had won the election), *unless* they also viewed liberals in a stereotypical way, perhaps similar to a political caricature.

The only significant interaction we found in the five individual social behaviors was in predicting how contentious participants felt a discussion with the target would be. We found that as narrative valence became more positive, liberal participants (who wrote about a Trump supporter target) reported that the target would be less contentious, while conservative participants (who wrote about a Clinton supporter

target) reported that the target would be *more* contentious when they wrote more positively to describe the target.

One speculation is that this interaction occurred because liberal participants, whose side lost the election, may have been more motivated to understand the perspective of Trump voters in order to make sense of why someone would vote for Trump (and why enough people had voted for him to win the presidential election). As perspective taking has classically been associated with increased empathy (Batson et al., 1997), perhaps this was an effort on the part of liberal participants to create a more positive narrative for the conservative target and to reduce how contentious they perceived their political out-group to be. After coming to such an understanding however, liberals may still have personally felt that the target's position was less valid or liked the target less because they still disagreed with the values they perceived Trump supporters to have, despite imagining they could have a more civil conversation with the target. Conversely, conservative participants may have perceived Clinton supporters to be "sore losers" about the election. If conservatives did perceive liberals to be "sore losers," they may have actually been facetious in using more positive writing to describe the target, providing a caricature of liberals, as previously discussed.

Interestingly, this interaction effect on how contentious the target was perceived differed slightly from the model combining all five positive social outcomes. In the composite model, more positive valence always increased positive social outcomes, but it had a more pronounced effect on liberals writing about a Trump supporter. However, in the model predicting contentiousness, conservatives who wrote more positively actually thought the Clinton supporter would be *more* contentious (i.e., a decreased

positive social outcome). These differing results may be an example of how the more specific social behavior questions may produce slightly different outcomes than a larger, more general scale, and that specific social behaviors may not all be impacted in the same way by the same variables. For instance, during a contentious time in politics, participants may respond differently to a question pertaining to the contentious nature of their political out-group compared to other specific, and perhaps not as salient, social behaviors. Perceived target contentiousness was also the only question worded more negatively when participants responded to it, and thus had to be reverse coded for the composite score of positive social outcomes. However, it is important to note that these differing effects could also have been in part due to errors in the narrative valence coding we developed or may have simply been spurious. Furthermore, the mixed results we found for different social behaviors may have been specific to political intergroup relations, and as such these narrative strategies should be considered using different intergroup relations (e.g., racial, religious, gender, etc.). Nevertheless, further research should continue to examine how narrative strategies in perspective taking may impact both general measures of social outcomes, and more specific, individual behaviors of social interaction.

Finally, we found an interaction such that as valence became more positive, for participants who used *greater* concentrations of liberal stereotypes in their narrative, the extent to which they felt the target would be contentious actually decreased; the inverse relationship was true when people used lower concentrations of liberal stereotypes. We were not sure what could have caused such an interaction, but future research that follows up on these effects may clarify what had happened. Moreover, additional

research on our findings, especially the surprising ones, are necessary as these results were exploratory and could be due to spurious relationships in this specific dataset that might not replicate with different participants. Furthermore, to determine if these relationships persist more broadly, additional research that accounts for diverse political beliefs (e.g., not just broadly looking at Clinton and Trump supporters, but conservative and liberal identifiers or specific political beliefs on taxes, immigration, religion, etc.) and changing political beliefs during a different time period (such as not immediately following a presidential election) would need to be conducted.

Concluding Thoughts

Taken together, the results from this study could inform why past research has shown conflicting findings on whether perspective taking helps or hinders social relations. We found that people had a disproportionate preference for writing from a third-person point of view when taking the perspective of an out-group member. Previous work in perspective taking typically has not looked into the point of view participants use, but this variable may be able to show whether the varying manipulations of perspective taking accomplish what researchers hope they do (e.g., can the amount people actually put themselves “in another’s shoes” during imagine-self perspective taking be measured by use of first-person point of view?)

The effect of whether stereotyping increases or decreases after perspective taking may stem not only from how stereotypically participants describe the target when taking their perspective, but also from whether they might be crafting an over-the-top, stereotypical caricature using first-person point of view (in effect not truly attempting to take the perspective of another). Past research has struggled with inconsistent

manipulations of perspective taking as well as inconsistent results about the positive impact of perspective taking on intergroup relations (Sassenrath et al., 2016), thus validating the need for research like the current study in exploring differences in natural perspective taking strategies. Indeed, more consistent manipulations of perspective taking may be able to be developed from further exploration of the natural strategies people employ when perspective taking that improve intergroup relations (as opposed to harming intergroup relations), instead of using a perspective taking intervention based on researcher intuitions and not actual natural participant strategies.

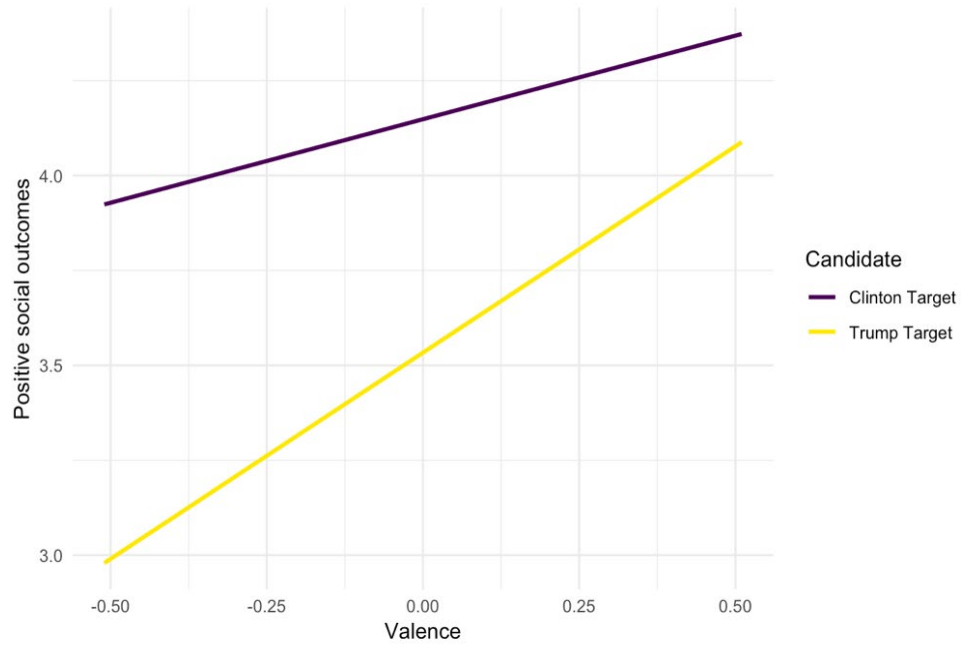
Additionally, we found that it may be useful to consider potential social behaviors towards the perspective taking target separately. The narrative strategies of interest (i.e., narrative valence and concentration of stereotypes) seemed to have different effects on participants' ratings of how contentious an interaction with a member of their out-group would be, relative to other social outcomes. This is not surprising due to the highly contentious nature of the 2016 U.S. presidential election (Pew Research Center, 2016), and we speculate our findings demonstrate the complex mental processes that may be present when trying to understand someone from one's out-group in the midst of intergroup conflict. Moreover, it is important to note that other social behaviors might be impacted by different intergroup contexts (i.e., created by racial, religious, or gender differences). The fact that our predictors (i.e., stereotype use, valence) had different impacts when considering the contentiousness of an interaction with a political out-group as opposed to other, more positive, social behavior outcomes demonstrates that the strategies people employ when perspective taking may differentially impact various social behaviors. Some strategies, such as how positively

participants write about the target, may not have the same effect on outcomes and would benefit from further research to understand the subtleties of how people take the perspective of another person.

Our results start to answer questions about *when* perspective taking can improve social outcomes. In future research, it would be useful to look at how people taking the perspective of in-group members would be affected by these narrative strategies, as well as determining whether the effects we found are present in contexts other than politics. Most importantly, research needs to understand that there might be things happening below the surface in perspective taking, things that run deeper than simple manipulations of perspective taking instructions. Perspective taking is a natural part of human behavior, and to treat it as something universally manipulatable, ignoring any underlying natural processes at play that could impact that manipulation, would be a mistake. Like any nuanced phenomenon, recent research has demonstrated that perspective taking is not a catch-all intervention for improving social relations, but nor is it entirely without benefits. Understanding why past research has found inconsistent effects of perspective taking on social outcomes is a necessary first-step to creating interventions that can reliably help improve intergroup relations. Using a bottom-up approach to study perspective taking may be a valuable route to better understand not only when perspective taking can help, but *how* these interventions may need to be adapted depending on different contexts in order to effectively help social outcomes.

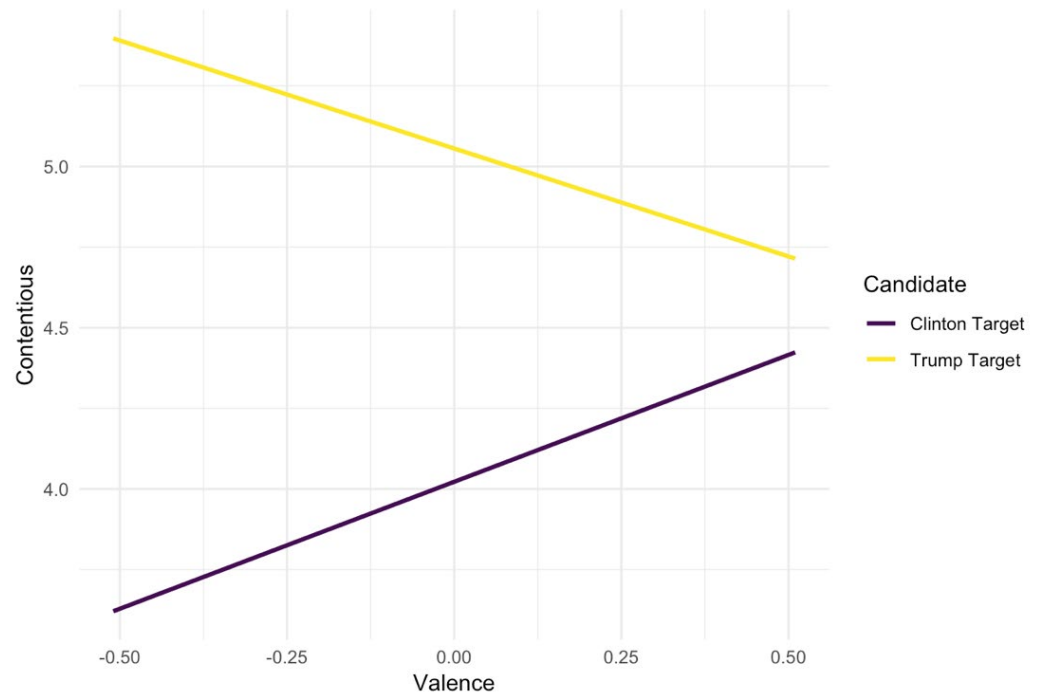
Figures

Figure 1: Interaction of Narrative Valence and Candidate Preference on Positive Social Outcomes



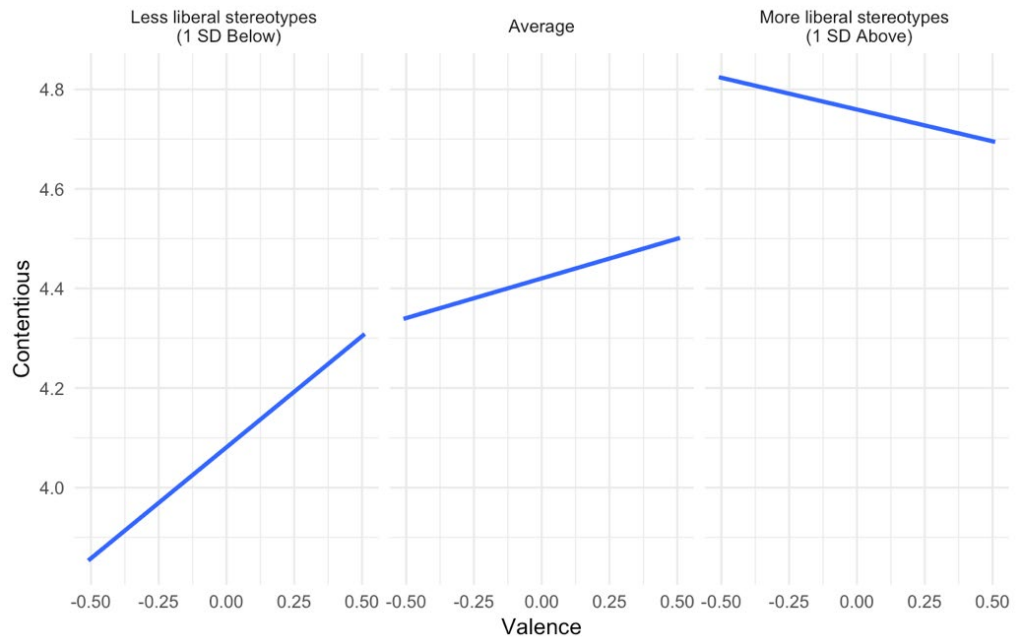
Positive social outcomes predicted by an interaction between candidate preference of the target and average narrative valence to describe the target.

Figure 2: Interaction of Narrative Valence and Candidate Preference on Target Contentiousness



Perceived contentiousness of a discussion with the target predicted by an interaction between candidate preference of the target and average narrative valence to describe the target.

Figure 3: Interaction of Narrative Valence and Concentration of Liberal Stereotypes on Target Contentiousness



Perceived contentiousness of a discussion with the target predicted by an interaction between the concentration of liberal stereotypes used in the narrative and average narrative valence to describe the target.

Tables

Table 1: Means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation matrix for the five social outcomes.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4
1. Willingness to Discuss	4.08	2.08	–			
2. Target Treatment	3.46	1.74	0.29	–		
3. Validity	3.43	1.84	0.29	0.48	–	
4. Liking	3.47	1.56	0.39	0.69	0.63	–
5. Contentiousness	4.86	1.76	-0.12	-0.27	-0.2	-0.27

Appendix A: Stereotype Coding Examples

Stereotype Themes	Examples	
Liberal	Coded as a +1	Coded as a -1
<i>Lazy</i>	“And then goes to the local casino and spends almost all her welfare check there.”	“She believes in ‘pro life’ and that people should take care of themselves and not look for handouts.”
<i>Overly sensitive snowflake</i>	“Wake up and cry, then look at the news complain about trump [sic] in the comment section.”	“Trump’s going to make the lying scientists STFU about global warming and stop letting the ‘snowflakes’ stand in the way of progress.”
<i>Environmentalist</i>	“Tomorrow she will go march for science and global warming.”	“She litters the ground with her signs and other garbage, then returns home.”
<i>Education elitist</i>	“Her husband picks them up from school (private school).”	“Stupid.”
<i>Social justice warrior</i>	“And sign a petition for transgender equality.”	“Jen is a homophobe and she doesn't want to see equality.”
<i>Close-minded liberal</i>	“Jen awakens and immediately turns on MSNBC to help her know what to be outraged about.”	“Once at work, Jen attempts to ignore her ‘liberal’ coworkers.”
Conservative		
<i>Racist</i>	“She doesn't want to be bothered with nasty immigrants or people of other cultures.”	“Jen often talks in support of allowing illegal immigrants to enter the country.”
<i>Religious</i>	“Pray and go to church.”	“Is probably an atheist.”
<i>Gun-supporter</i>	“Today she is planning to leave work early to go to the gun shop and pick up a new AR-15 that she ordered.”	She probably tries to "educate" Trumps supporters about gun control.”
<i>Favor traditional gender roles</i>	“She may work part time but primarily takes care of children and household while husband focuses on work.”	“She is the sole support for her family after her husband lost his job.”
<i>Economic elitist</i>	“My maid doesn't work on Sunday so I have to clean up by myself.”	“She would think about a charity she wants to donate to.”
<i>Close-minded conservative</i>	“Jen is told by Fox and Friends that Democrats are stupid and whiney, and that they have a sense of entitlement.”	“She is angry all these rednecks are sharing fake news.”

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