Beyond Affective Polarization: Toward an Affective Depolarization Framework

Liane Weintraub, PhD
ORCID ID 0009-0008-5944-8420

Abstract

Although affective depolarization has received growing attention in political science and political psychology, the construct remains conceptually underdeveloped. Existing scholarship employs the term to describe diverse forms of change, often treating affective depolarization as simply the inverse of affective polarization, without adequately distinguishing among its possible manifestations or the processes through which change occurs. Drawing on a conceptual synthesis of the scholarly literature, this paper proposes an integrative framework that conceptualizes affective depolarization as a multidimensional phenomenon comprising complementary process and outcome dimensions. The process dimension encompasses interpersonal, cognitive, and affective processes through which depolarizing change may emerge. The outcome dimension distinguishes four forms of change: reduced hostility, warmth and humanization, improved relational engagement, and diminished identity-based division. The framework recognizes that these processes and outcomes may manifest at individual, relational, and collective levels of analysis. By distinguishing how depolarizing change may occur, what forms it may take, and where it may be observed, the framework provides a basis for conceptualization, measurement, and empirical investigation. This approach offers a foundation for integrating findings across studies, evaluating depolarization interventions, and advancing a more nuanced understanding of how political differences may be navigated without requiring ideological agreement.

Transparency Statement

Materials, Data, and Code: This paper presents a conceptual synthesis of previously published scholarly literature. The sources examined are identified in the manuscript and its references, and the approach to identifying and reviewing these sources is described in the text. No empirical data were collected or analyzed.

Generative AI Use: OpenAI ChatGPT (GPT-6) was used to support literature discovery and provide editorial feedback and proofreading. The author independently evaluated all scholarly sources, developed the conceptual framework, wrote the manuscript, and assumes full responsibility for its content.

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

Introduction

Affective polarization has become one of the most influential constructs in contemporary political science and political psychology. Distinct from issue polarization which refers to partisan differences over policy positions, *affective polarization* concerns the growing relational divide between political outgroups (Iyengar et al., 2019). While this is a global phenomenon, this paper is primarily concerned with the United States.

In recent decades, Americans affiliated with either of the major political parties have increasingly come to view members of the opposing party with suspicion and contempt, contributing to personal animus, heightened social distance, and diminished willingness to engage across ideological differences (Pew Research Center, 2022). The result is a level of polarization that is rapidly becoming pernicious and threatens the health of democratic society (McCoy & Somer, 2019; Orhan, 2022).

Concern regarding affective polarization has led scholars and practitioners to explore interventions designed to reduce partisan hostility, facilitate intergroup contact, and instill constructive communication skills that preserve plurality without devolving into dehumanization (Levendusky, 2018; Levendusky & Stecula, 2021). Yet, while the causes and effects of affective polarization have received substantial theoretical and empirical attention, considerably less attention has been given to its counterpart, *affective depolarization*.

This paper follows an established approach to conceptual theory-building that organizes, synthesizes, and extends prior scholarship to develop a more coherent explanatory framework (Jabareen, 2009; Torraco, 2016). Rather than proposing an entirely novel construct, the framework consolidates fragmented conceptualizations of affective depolarization, formalizes their common dimensions, and extends them into a theoretically articulated model to guide future research. This paper argues that affective depolarization should be conceptualized as more than the attenuation of acrimony. Rather than treating depolarization simply as an outcome reflected in reduced hostility, the paper conceptualizes affective depolarization as a dynamic phenomenon involving both processes and outcomes. Its contribution lies in systematically distinguishing and integrating these process and outcome dimensions, differentiating distinct forms of depolarizing change, and clarifying the levels at which such change may occur and be measured. The resulting framework is intended to provide greater conceptual clarity regarding affective depolarization and to support future theory development, measurement, and investigation of the conditions through which depolarizing change might occur.

The Rise of Affective Polarization

Prior work on political polarization focused on issue-based disagreement and partisan sorting among both citizens and elites (e.g., Abramowitz & Saunders, 2008; Fiorina & Abrams, 2008).

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

The rise of affective polarization scholarship directed attention to the emotional, psychological, and relational dimensions of how Americans evaluate their political outgroups (e.g., Iyengar et al., 2012; Iyengar et al., 2019).

Drawing on Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Iyengar et al. (2012) posited that in the current polarized context, political identities increasingly function as Americans' salient social identities. The result is widespread identity-based partisan tribalism in which political affiliation leads Democrats and Republicans to regard each other disparagingly, regardless of specific ideological disagreements. Subsequent scholarship expanded and refined this concept, demonstrating the connection between affective polarization and an array of democratic challenges related to outgroup hostility and social distrust (e.g., Finkel et al., 2020; Mason, 2018; Van Bavel et al., 2024).

Although scholars continue to debate its causes and measurement, affective polarization has become an important focus of research on contemporary political conflict (Druckman & Levendusky, 2019; Iyengar et al., 2019). Alongside growing concern about the democratic consequences of affective polarization, researchers have increasingly focused on interventions intended to reduce partisan hostility and improve cross-partisan relations (Finkel et al., 2020; Hartman et al., 2022). Such efforts are often informed by Intergroup Contact Theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), which suggests that meaningful interaction between members of opposing parties can reduce bias. This perspective underlies a growing body of work examining dialogue, deliberation, perspective-taking, and other forms of engagement that might foster more positive orientations toward political outgroups (Fishkin et al., 2021; Hartman et al., 2022; Santoro & Broockman, 2022).

The resulting literature includes extensive research on the antecedents, consequences, measurement, and potential remedies associated with affective polarization. Yet, despite the substantial conceptual refinement and empirical investigation of the construct, its emerging counterpart has received comparatively little conceptual attention. While the term "affective depolarization" appears across a range of contemporary scholarship, the present review reveals considerable ambiguity about what precisely constitutes the phenomenon.

Mapping Existing Uses of Affective Depolarization

To examine how affective depolarization has been employed in the scholarly literature, the present review identified and analyzed 19 scholarly sources in which the term appears. Table 1 presents the sources in chronological order and summarizes the manner in which each employs the term. Notably, none of the reviewed sources provides an explicit conceptual definition of affective depolarization, requiring its meaning to be inferred from the context.

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

Sources were identified through searches of university library databases using the exact terms "affective depolarization" and "affective depolarisation," supplemented by examination of references and related citing literature. To further assess the completeness of the search, ChatGPT was employed to identify potentially overlooked sources. All sources identified through this search were independently reviewed and verified by the author. The review included peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and book chapters in which the focal term appeared. Preprints, theses, working papers, dissertations, conference reports, and other non-peer-reviewed sources were generally omitted, with exceptions noted in Table 1.

The sources were examined comparatively to identify recurring meanings, outcomes, and levels of analysis associated with the term. Conceptually similar forms of change were grouped together, while distinctions were retained where the literature implied qualitatively different phenomena. This comparative analysis provided the basis for the four recurring outcome forms developed below and illustrated in Table 2.

Table 1

Existing Uses of the Term "Affective Depolarization" in the Scholarly Literature

Year	Author(s)	Title	Article/Chapter Focus	Implied Definition
2019	Druckman et al.	How Incivility on Partisan Media (De)Polarizes the Electorate	US media tone, partisan incivility, and polarization	Reduced attachment, trust, or affect toward one's political in-group
2020	Lee	Solidarity in the Anti-Extradition Bill Movement in Hong Kong	Political solidarity vs. factions within a Hong Kong social movement	Reduced hostility and improved mutual evaluations between political groups
2021	Kubin & von Sikorski	Role of (Social) Media in Political Polarization: A Systematic Review	Polarization vs. depolarization conditions in media environments	Reduced attachment, trust, or affect toward one's political in-group
2022	Ludwig & Müller	Does Social Media Use Promote Political Mass Polarization?	Structured Literature review: Social media use and political polarization	Reduction in affective polarization through counter-attitudinal exposure
2023	Fong & Lee	Disagreement Resolution on Digital Communication Platform in a Self-Directed Political Consumerism Campaign	Digital communication, internal disagreement, and solidarity in the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement	Reduced affective polarization and increased solidarity between previously opposed factions
2023	Herzog	Markets, Deliberators, Experts	Democratic theory, deliberation, and civic engagement	Increased positive regard toward political opponents
2023	Johnston	Affective Polarization in the	Longitudinal Canadian	Improved affective relations

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

		Canadian Party System, 1988–2021	party dynamics and depolarization episodes	between partisan groups
2023	Khan & Siu	Evidence for Political Moderation Within Homogeneous Groups	Deliberation, moderation, and depolarization	Increased warmth toward political outgroups
2023	Mladenović	The Problem of Political Polarization and a Way Out of It	Philosophical analysis of political polarization and depolarization	Reduced affective polarization through discussion with political opponents
2024	Rekker & Harteveld	Understanding Factual Belief Polarization: The Role of Trust, Political Sophistication, and Affective Polarization	Factual belief polarization and its relationship to affective polarization in the Netherlands	A period characterized by declining affective polarization over time
2025	Baron et al.	Couples Therapy for Divided America: Assessing the Effects of Reciprocal Group Reflection on Partisan Polarization	Evaluation of a Braver Angels dialogue intervention designed to reduce partisan polarization	Assumed to refer to reductions in affective polarization
2025	Galais & Balinhas	The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic and De-Escalation Policies on Affective Polarization	Crisis effects and macro-level polarization in Spain	Reduction in aggregate levels of affective polarization
2025	Lee	Pro-Democracy Contention in Hong Kong: Relational Dynamics Between the Umbrella Movement and the Anti-Extradition Protests	Relational dynamics, factional divisions, and solidarity across Hong Kong protest movements (Ch. 6)	A relational process through which affective divisions between movement factions diminish, enabling greater solidarity across prior divisions
2025	Vera-Revilla et al.	Affective Polarization and Social Media: Theories, Models and Contemporary Dynamics	Conceptual synthesis of polarization and depolarization literature	General reduction in hostility between political groups
2026	Erdoğan et al.	The Evolving Study of Political Polarization	Conceptual review of polarization and depolarization	Reduced intergroup hostility and improved cross-partisan relations
2026	Gençer	Challenging Out-Group Stereotypes in Backsliding Democracies	Stereotype correction and intergroup perception in Türkiye	Reduced social distance and reduced negative outgroup stereotyping
2026	Hruschka & Appel	Reducing Political Polarization Through Conversations with AI	AI-mediated dialogue and conversational receptiveness	Increased positive affect toward political outgroups

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

2026	Wang	Pro-Democracy Contention in Hong Kong: Relational Dynamics Between the Umbrella Movement and Anti-Extradition Protests	Review of Lee's (2025) *Pro-Democracy Contention in Hong Kong*	Reports that Chs. 6 and 7 discuss how the "affective depolarisation" around radicalism led to an "ethics of solidarity" (p. 193) during the anti-ELAB protests
2026	Wurm	Do Bridging Organizations Bridge? Partisanship and Cross-Partisan Ties in the US Political Depolarization Field	Bridging organizations and cross-partisan civic networks	Reduced emotional distance between people or groups holding different beliefs

Note. The table summarizes all identified peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, and book chapters that include the term "affective depolarization" (or "affective depolarisation"). To ensure consistency and scholarly comparability, preprints, working papers, theses, dissertations, conference papers, reports, or other non-peer-reviewed sources were generally excluded. One publicly available preprint (Gençer, 2026) was retained because it explicitly employed the focal construct and met all other inclusion criteria. One additional preprint identified during the search (Combs et al., 2022) was excluded from the analytic corpus because the subsequently published peer-reviewed article (Combs et al., 2023) no longer employed the focal construct.

Table 1 reveals three noteworthy patterns. First, the term "affective depolarization" occurs across a diverse range of scholarly literatures and geographic contexts, including political communication (Druckman et al., 2019), deliberative democracy (Herzog, 2023), social movement studies (Fong & Lee, 2023; Lee, 2020, 2025), democratic theory, AI-mediated dialogue (Hruschka & Appel, 2026), and conceptual reviews (Erdoğan et al., 2026; Vera-Revilla et al., 2025) spanning North America, Europe, Hong Kong, and Türkiye. Second, despite the growing use of the term, none of the reviewed sources includes a formal definition of the construct. Instead, authors employ the term in a variety of ways that cluster around several recurring themes, including:

- Reduced hostility toward political opponents or groups (e.g., Erdoğan et al., 2026; Vera-Revilla et al., 2025)
- Increased warmth, positive regard, or affective receptiveness toward political outgroups (e.g., Baron et al., 2025; Herzog, 2023; Hruschka & Appel, 2026; Khan & Siu, 2023)
- Reduced emotional or social distance between opposing groups (e.g., Gençer, 2026; Wurm, 2026)
- Improved intergroup relations or political solidarity (e.g., Fong & Lee, 2023; Johnston, 2023; Lee, 2020, 2025; Wang, 2026)
- Reduced partisan attachment (e.g., Druckman et al., 2019; Kubin & von Sikorski, 2021)
- Aggregate or historical declines in affective polarization (e.g., Galais & Balinhas, 2025; Rekker & Harteveld, 2024)

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

The following representative passages further illustrate both the diversity of meanings attached to the construct and the absence of a shared conceptual understanding. The closest approximation is Wurm (2026), who writes that affective depolarization "refers to the emotional distance one feels toward people or groups who believe differently from oneself" (p. 9). Wurm's formulation emphasizes a single relational dimension of the construct but does not elaborate its broader conceptual boundaries, level of analysis, or relationship to other forms of depolarization. Notably, Wurm's description also closely mirrors prevailing definitions of *affective polarization* (e.g., Iyengar et al., 2012; Iyengar et al., 2019), differing only in directional emphasis rather than conceptual structure.

Elsewhere, Druckman et al. (2019) characterize affective depolarization as occurring when partisans become "less attached to their own party" (p. 292), whereas Herzog (2023) describes it as participants developing "more positive views of individuals from the opposite side of the spectrum" (p. 67). Lee (2020) identifies "a trend toward affective depolarization between the two camps" ("Moderate-radical divide" section, para. 13). In his subsequent book-length analysis, Lee (2025) develops the concept more extensively, describing "a trend of affective depolarization" between moderate and radical factions within Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement, and emphasizing that "the process was far from complete" (p. 188). Elsewhere, Mladenović (2023) argues that affective depolarization "can primarily be achieved" through particular forms of discussion (p. 284), and Gençer (2026) cautions that "belief correction and affective depolarization should not be treated as interchangeable outcomes" (p. 17).

Other sources employ the construct even more implicitly. Baron et al. (2025) describe certain deliberative interventions as a "target for affective depolarization" (p. 5) without defining the term, while Rekker and Harteveld (2024) refer retrospectively to "a period of affective depolarization" ("Notes" section) to characterize longitudinal changes in political attitudes. Collectively, these descriptions reveal considerable variation in what scholars treat as affective depolarization. With the notable exception of Lee (2025), however, the literature predominantly invokes the construct as a desirable outcome of some antecedent, intervention, or social change. These examples also illustrate the degree to which the term has entered scholarly discourse despite the absence of a shared conceptual meaning across the literature reviewed here.

A third pattern concerns whether affective depolarization is treated as an outcome or a process. Most of the reviewed literature employs the term in outcome-oriented ways, characterized by changes in affective states or relationships rather than as a process of change. Across the literature, the term is used to describe a variety of states or conditions characterized by lower levels of affective polarization, whether describing increased warmth toward political opponents (e.g., Baron et al., 2025; Herzog, 2023; Hruschka & Appel, 2026; Khan & Siu, 2023), declining levels of affective polarization over time (e.g., Galais & Balinhas, 2025; Johnston, 2023; Rekker & Harteveld, 2024), improved solidarity between divided groups (e.g., Fong & Lee, 2023; Lee,

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

2020; Wang, 2026), or reduced social distance (e.g., Gençer, 2026; Wurm, 2026). Although many studies examine processes through which depolarizing change may occur, the construct itself is described in terms of the resulting changes rather than the processes that produce them.

Lee (2025) represents an important departure from this pattern. In his analysis of Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement, affective depolarization is treated not only as a reduction in affective polarization, but as a developing relational process through which previously divided factions developed greater solidarity. Lee situates this change within broader relational dynamics, particularly ideological brokerage between factions and their shared experience of state repression. This suggests that the literature contains at least an emerging process-oriented conception of affective depolarization, even though that conception has not been generalized into a broader account of the construct or integrated with its outcome-oriented uses.

While these phenomena are related, they are not synonymous. Some describe attitudinal changes at the individual level, others capture shifts in intergroup relations, and still others reflect aggregate social conditions. The literature also differs in whether affective depolarization is treated primarily as an outcome or, as Lee (2025) suggests, as a process through which relationships across political divisions may change. Consequently, the existing literature does not converge on a single understanding of affective depolarization, the level of analysis at which it operates, or the specific outcomes that constitute it. This makes comparison across studies challenging and contributes to the construct's conceptual ambiguity. Clarifying these distinctions is particularly important because existing depolarization interventions target and assess different outcomes (Hartman et al., 2022), and reductions in affective polarization do not necessarily produce corresponding changes in other outcomes associated with political division (Voelkel et al., 2023). Therefore, what constitutes successful depolarization depends, in part, on how the phenomenon is conceptualized.

Existing Approaches to Depolarization

Despite the absence of a shared definition, scholars and practitioners have developed numerous interventions to reduce affective polarization, including through structured dialogue, deliberation, perspective-taking, intergroup contact, media exposure, identity-based priming, and other approaches (e.g., Finkel et al., 2020; Fishkin et al., 2021; Hartman et al., 2022; Levendusky, 2018; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Santoro & Broockman, 2022). The outcomes these interventions seek to produce provide a window into how affective depolarization is implicitly understood and reveal that depolarization initiatives may pursue different, and sometimes competing, forms of change. The present review identifies four distinct, recurring goals: reducing hostility toward political opponents, cultivating warmth and humanization, improving intergroup relations and civic engagement, and diminishing identity-based divisions.

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

Reduced Hostility

A common goal of depolarization interventions is the reduction of hostility toward political opponents (Hartman et al., 2022). From this perspective, successful depolarization involves less animosity, resentment, distrust, or dislike toward political outgroups. Intervention effectiveness may be evaluated using feeling thermometers and social distance measures (e.g., Finkel et al., 2020; Santoro & Broockman, 2022). Interventions pursuing this goal may seek to correct inaccurate perceptions of political opponents or reduce stereotyping (Hartman et al., 2022). For example, research on meta-perception correction has found that informing individuals that members of the other party are less hostile than they thought can reduce negative evaluations of outgroups (Lees & Cikara, 2020). Within this approach, affective depolarization is implicitly understood as a reduction in negative affect towards the outgroup.

Warmth and Humanization

Other approaches seek to cultivate empathy, perspective-taking, warmth, and more positive regard toward political opponents (Paksoy & Huddy, 2026). Rather than focusing solely on reducing hostility, these dialogue-based initiatives create opportunities for participants to share personal values and lived experiences in order to foster mutual recognition and shared humanity across differences (Fishkin et al., 2021; Levendusky & Stecula, 2021). These aims are consistent with dialogic and humanistic traditions that emphasize authentic encounter, mutual understanding, and respectful communication as foundations for constructive relationships (Bohm, 1996/2004; Buber, 1923/1971; Rogers, 1957). Within this approach, depolarization emerges through understanding, recognition, and human connection rather than persuasion or ideological convergence.

A variety of techniques reflect this orientation. Perspective-taking exercises ask participants to imagine the experiences or motivations of political opponents (Paksoy & Huddy, 2026), while other interventions use narrative storytelling and structured interaction to encourage participants to see each other as multidimensional individuals rather than partisan stereotypes (Baron et al., 2025). Practitioner-led initiatives similarly use dialogue to foster understanding and more constructive engagement across differences. Braver Angels workshops, for example, employ reciprocal reflection and structured cross-partisan interaction (Baron et al., 2025), while Living Room Conversations uses guided discussion structured around participants' experiences and perspectives (Hoffman et al., 2025). Within these approaches, affective depolarization is implicitly understood not simply as the absence of hostility, but as the presence of more affirming attitudes toward political outgroups.

Improved Relational Engagement

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

A third approach conceptualizes depolarization in relational rather than purely emotional terms. The desired outcome is not necessarily liking of political opponents on a personal level, but an increased capacity to engage constructively despite differences (Fishkin et al., 2021). These approaches measure success through indicators such as trust, cooperation, discourse quality, and a willingness to sustain relationships across partisan divides (Hartman et al., 2022; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

This orientation is particularly evident in the civic bridging movement. Organizations such as Braver Angels, Bridge Alliance, and the Listen First Project exemplify this orientation (Mathews & Ross, 2026). Such initiatives employ conversational practices including active listening, perspective-taking, and identifying shared interests to strengthen trust and civic cooperation without seeking political issue agreement (Oliver-Blackburn & Chatham-Carpenter, 2023). Within this approach, successful affective depolarization is reflected in improved relational functioning and may occur even when substantial disagreement remains.

Diminished Identity-Based Division

Finally, some approaches focus less on emotions or relationships, and more on the cognitive and identity structures that fuel political conflict. Grounded in Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the Common Ingroup Identity Model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2014), these interventions seek to reduce the salience of partisan identities by strengthening other identities such as national, civic, or human affiliation.

One common technique to these approaches involves identity priming. For example, Levendusky (2018) demonstrated that emphasizing a shared American identity can reduce partisan hostility by priming individuals to view political opponents as members of a common group rather than a competing faction. Beyond identity-focused approaches, other depolarization efforts emphasize cognitive flexibility, complexity, and openness to alternative perspectives. Such interventions encourage participants to recognize nuance, tolerate ambiguity, and resist rigid us-versus-them thinking (Hartman et al., 2022; Van Bavel et al., 2024). Within this approach, affective depolarization is implicitly understood as a weakening of identity-based divisions and the cognitive structures that sustain them.

Taken together, these approaches reveal that depolarization efforts often pursue substantially different outcomes. Although all of these goals are related, they are not interchangeable. Consequently, interventions described as successful forms of depolarization may, in fact, produce substantively different kinds of change. An individual could experience less hostility without developing warmth, demonstrate greater empathy without sustaining meaningful relationships with outgroup members, or maintain a strong partisan identity while engaging constructively with political opponents. This complicates comparisons across studies.

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

The diversity of these intervention goals mirrors scholarly efforts to categorize depolarization strategies. For example, Hartman et al.'s (2022) thoughts, relationships, and institutions (TRI) framework organizes intervention approaches around thoughts, relationships, and institutions, which further underscores the multidimensional nature of depolarization. Yet, despite this growing body of work, the literature provides little guidance regarding how these outcomes relate to each other or which, if any, should constitute affective depolarization. Moreover, the approaches reviewed here differ not only in terms of the outcomes they seek to produce, but also in the processes through which they pursue change. These observations suggest that affective depolarization should not be treated as a singular outcome and underscore the need for greater conceptual precision regarding the nature of the construct.

Is Affective Depolarization Simply the Inverse of Affective Polarization?

One reason affective depolarization remains conceptually ambiguous is that many existing uses implicitly treat it as the opposite of affective polarization. As the preceding review demonstrates, affective depolarization is typically represented through reductions in the same indicators (e.g., hostility, emotional distance, social distance, or negative affect) that are commonly used to measure affective polarization (Druckman & Levendusky, 2019; Iyengar et al., 2012; Iyengar et al., 2019; Levendusky, 2018; Santoro & Broockman, 2022). Under that assumption, depolarization simply implies movement in the reverse direction along the same continuum: as hostility, distrust, and negative affect toward opponents decrease, affective polarization declines and affective depolarization correspondingly increases. This pattern is evident throughout the literature summarized in Table 1, including formulations that define affective depolarization primarily through reduced emotional distance or other inverse indicators of affective polarization, rather than a distinct construct.

This interpretation has intuitive appeal. Affective polarization is commonly defined in terms of negative orientations toward political outgroups (Iyengar et al., 2012; Iyengar et al., 2019). Accordingly, it is reasonable to assume that affective depolarization reflects movement in the opposite direction. Indeed, this logic is reflected in intervention studies that evaluate success through declines in outgroup animosity or improvements in feeling thermometer scores (Hartman et al., 2022; Santoro & Broockman, 2022).

However, the preceding review also suggests that this inverse relationship may be insufficient as a complete conceptualization of affective depolarization. Outcomes that scholars and practitioners seek through depolarization such as empathy, humanization, trust, constructive engagement, and shared identity are not fully captured by simply moving in the opposite direction along a hostility continuum. In other words, the absence of negative affect does not necessarily imply the presence of positive regard, relational connection, or civic engagement.

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

Lee's (2025) analysis illustrates this distinction. Empirically, Lee identifies affective depolarization through a narrowing affective divide between previously antagonistic political factions, consistent with an inverse-polarization conception. Yet his theoretical account extends beyond declining antagonism, situating affective depolarization within relational dynamics involving ideological brokerage and changing relations between moderate and radical factions. Thus, the existing literature suggests that affective depolarization can encompass both movement away from affective polarization and relational changes not fully captured by simply reversing its indicators. The present paper therefore does not reject reductions in conventional indicators of affective polarization as indicators of affective depolarization. Rather, it argues that such reductions capture only one possible form of depolarizing change that should not, by themselves, define affective depolarization's conceptual boundaries.

Taken together, these distinctions raise a broader conceptual question: should affective depolarization be understood simply as *less affective polarization*, or can it also encompass forms of affective and relational change that are not reducible to movement along the same continuum? The answer has important implications for theory, measurement, and intervention design. If affective depolarization is merely the inverse of affective polarization, then existing measures of hostility and social distance may be sufficient. If, however, affective depolarization encompasses additional relational, affective, and identity-related dimensions, then a more expansive conceptual framework is needed. The present paper adopts the latter position. Rather than treating affective depolarization as simply the reversal of affective polarization, it synthesizes the disparate ways the construct has been used across the literature into a coherent, multidimensional framework that both formalizes existing outcome domains and specifies the processes through which they emerge. In doing so, the proposed framework organizes, extends, and renders testable an otherwise fragmented body of literature.

Is Affective Depolarization an Outcome, a Process, or Both?

Affective depolarization can denote either an ongoing process or a resulting outcome. An implicit assumption throughout much of the depolarization literature is that concept is best understood as a goal or an outcome. Yet, depolarizing change may emerge through a variety of interpersonal, cognitive, or affective processes that unfold over time (Hartman et al., 2022). As Lee's (2025) process-oriented treatment also suggests, this raises the question of whether affective depolarization refers solely to the outcome of processes or whether the processes through which depolarizing change develops should also be considered part of the construct.

Outcome-Oriented Conceptualizations

Much of the existing literature conceptualizes affective depolarization as an outcome reflected in changes in attitudes, emotions, identities, and relationships. This orientation is unsurprising given that affective polarization has typically been defined and measured through

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

individual-level indicators such as outgroup evaluations, social distance, and affective ratings (Druckman & Levendusky, 2019; Iyengar et al., 2012; Iyengar et al., 2019). Likewise, interventions designed to reduce affective polarization are commonly evaluated using outcome measures assessing hostility, empathy, trust, or identity-based attitudes following participation in cross-partisan dialogue, deliberation, perspective-taking, media, or contact-based interventions (Finkel et al., 2020; Fishkin et al., 2021; Levendusky, 2018; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Santoro & Broockman, 2022). Consequently, depolarization is most often understood as a condition that individuals, relationships, or groups attain rather than as a process that unfolds within interaction.

The outcome-oriented perspective is useful as outcomes provide observable evidence of whether depolarizing change has occurred. Outcome-based indicators provide valuable insight into manifestations of depolarization. However, these indicators offer comparatively less guidance regarding the mechanisms of change, raising the possibility that outcome-oriented conceptualizations, while important, may not fully capture the nature of affective depolarization.

Change as Process

Although the four forms of change identified in the preceding analysis (reduced hostility, warmth and humanization, improved relational engagement, and diminished identity-based division) describe what changes as a result of affective depolarization, the intervention literature also points to recurring processes through which such change may occur. Lee's (2025) analysis provides an explicit example, attributing an emerging process of affective depolarization to interacting relational dynamics. Across the literature, three broad and overlapping categories emerge: interpersonal, cognitive, and affective processes (Fishkin et al., 2021; Hartman et al., 2022; Hruschka & Appel, 2026; Levendusky, 2018; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Santoro & Broockman, 2022).

Interpersonal processes are associated with interactions, engagement, and relationships. Cognitive processes are associated with ideas, beliefs, and understanding. Affective processes are associated with emotions, attachment, and motivation. Although none of these categories maps neatly onto a single outcome domain, collectively they provide a useful lens for considering how depolarizing change may unfold. Table 2 illustrates how the four outcomes may involve multiple processes operating individually or in combination.

Table 2

Affective Depolarization Outcomes and Associated Process Categories

Outcome	Interpersonal Processes	Cognitive Processes	Affective Processes
Reduced Hostility	Cross-partisan contact; dialogue	Stereotype revision metaperception correction	Emotional regulation; threat reduction

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

Warmth and Humanization	Personal storytelling	Perspective-taking; recognition of humanity	Empathic engagement; affective resonance
Improved Relational Engagement	Active listening; cooperative interaction; trust-building	Charitable interpretation; openness to difference	Trust formation; emotional investment
Diminished Identity-Based Division	Cross-group engagement	Recategorization; identity complexity development	Attenuation of identity salience; expansion of belongingness

Note. The process categories and examples are illustrative and serve as a heuristic for analysis rather than as a definitive taxonomy of affective depolarization processes. Individual outcomes may arise through multiple overlapping processes and the same process might contribute to more than one outcome.

Interpersonal Processes. Interpersonal processes involve change that occurs through human interaction, shaping attitudes, relationships, and social understanding. Long before the contemporary concern with polarization, dialogic theorists posited that meaningful engagement with others can foster personal and relational transformation. A few such examples include Buber (1923/1971), who emphasized the importance of encountering others as persons rather than objects, Rogers (1957), who highlighted empathic understanding, genuineness, and positive regard as relational conditions conducive to constructive personal change, and Bohm (1996/2004), who conceptualized dialogue as a process through which participants suspend assumptions and jointly explore meaning. Although these traditions were not developed specifically to address affective polarization, they collectively suggest that interpersonal processes may contribute to changes in how individuals perceive and relate to political opponents. Contemporary depolarization interventions frequently employ dialogue, perspective-sharing, active listening, and other related processes, reflecting the view that interpersonal interaction can serve as a catalyst for depolarizing change (Fishkin et al., 2021; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Santoro & Broockman, 2022).

Cognitive Processes. Cognitive processes involve changes in how individuals process information, revise assumptions, and reconstruct understanding. Across a variety of scholarly traditions, meaningful change has been linked to processes such as critical reflection, perspective-taking, cognitive flexibility, and the reconsideration of previously held beliefs. For example, Transformative Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1978, 2000) views perspective transformation as a process through which individuals critically examine their existing frames of reference and develop new or differentiated ways of understanding. Neuroscience research also examines how beliefs, perceptions, and social judgments are shaped and revised through processes associated with learning, attention, identity formation, and perspective-taking (Jost et al., 2014; Van Bavel & Pereira, 2018). Likewise, depolarization research has explored perspective-taking, metaperception correction, stereotype revision, and exposure to alternative

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

viewpoints as processes for reducing biased understandings of political opponents (Lees & Cikara, 2020; Muradova, 2021; Muradova & Arceneaux, 2022; Santoro & Broockman, 2022).

Affective Processes. Affective processes involve change associated with emotions, attachments, motivations, and perceptions of threat. Research on affective polarization has demonstrated that political conflict is not solely a matter of ideological disagreement; it is also characterized by emotional responses such as distrust, resentment, fear, and animosity toward political outgroups (Iyengar et al., 2012; Iyengar et al., 2019). Consequently, processes that alter these emotional responses may be relevant to understanding how depolarization occurs. Contemporary scholarship has increasingly examined the role of empathy, identity attachment, threat perception, and emotional regulation in shaping social and political attitudes (Jost et al., 2014; Van Bavel & Pereira, 2018). From this perspective, affective depolarization may involve processes through which individuals experience greater empathic connection, stronger feelings of belonging, and reduced attachment to adversarial forms of partisan identity. Although such changes may occur through interpersonal encounters, cognitive reflection, or other experiences, their significance lies in the affective shifts that accompany depolarizing change.

Affective Depolarization as Outcome and Process

The preceding discussion suggests that affective depolarization can be understood as both an outcome and a process. Lee (2025) provides an important precedent for the latter conception, demonstrating that affective depolarization has begun to be theorized not only as a resulting state but also as a process. However, this process-oriented conception has not yet been integrated with the predominantly outcome-oriented uses of the construct into a broader conceptual framework. Both perspectives provide valuable insights, and neither alone appears sufficient to capture the full complexity of the phenomenon. Conceptualizing affective depolarization solely as an outcome risks overlooking the interpersonal, cognitive, and affective processes through which change occurs. Conversely, focusing exclusively on process may obscure the observable and measurable changes that distinguish affective depolarization from other forms of social or psychological change. The relationship between process and outcome is therefore complementary rather than competing.

This distinction has important implications for both theory and practice. Conceptualizing depolarization as both a process and an outcome expands the range of phenomena available for analysis and creates opportunities not only to identify whether depolarizing change has occurred, but also how it unfolds. This dual perspective provides the foundation for the multidimensional framework presented below, which conceptualizes affective depolarization through complementary process and outcome dimensions.

The Affective Depolarization Framework

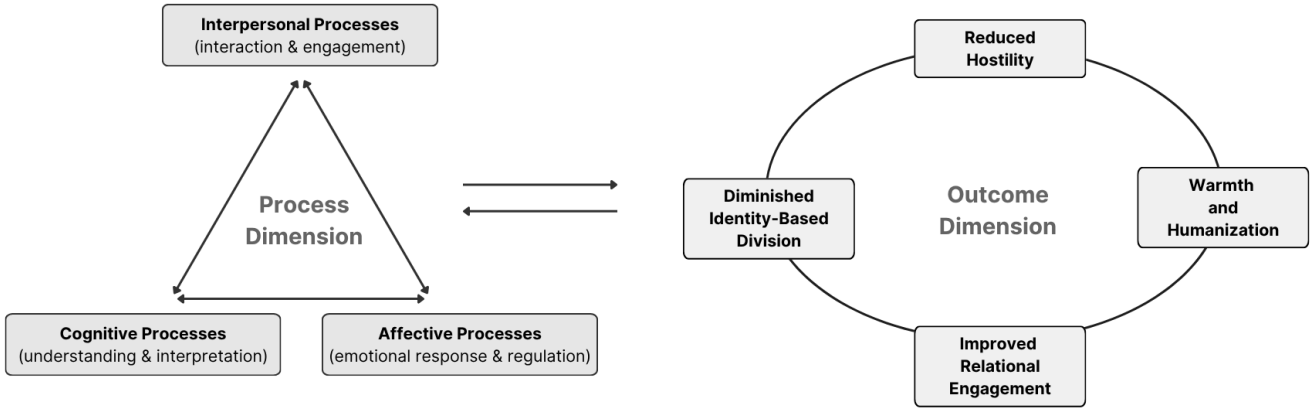
https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

Taken together, the literature contains heterogeneous outcome-oriented uses of affective depolarization and an emerging process-oriented conception, but lacks an integrative framework that systematically distinguishes and relates these dimensions. The framework proposed here (Fig. 1) conceptualizes affective depolarization as comprising both process and outcome dimensions. The process dimension reflects the interpersonal, cognitive, and affective processes through which depolarizing change may emerge over time. The outcome dimension reflects four forms of change identified in the scholarly literature: reduced hostility, warmth and humanization, improved relational engagement, and diminished identity-based division. What unites these forms is that each represents change in the affective, relational, or identity-based character of political division without requiring change in the substantive political disagreement. Together, these dimensions suggest that affective depolarization may be understood not only in terms of what changes, but also in how such change occurs. The framework therefore formalizes affective depolarization as a multidimensional construct that distinguishes between the processes through which depolarizing change may occur and the outcomes through which such change may be expressed.

The framework further recognizes that both processes and outcomes may operate at multiple levels of analysis. Some forms of change occur within individuals, others emerge in interpersonal relationships, and still others may be observed at broader collective levels such as groups, organizations, or communities. Consequently, the dimensions of affective depolarization and the levels at which they are examined all influence how the construct is conceptualized and measured. In this way, the framework distinguishes three analytically separate questions: how depolarizing change may occur, what form that change takes, and the level at which it happens.

Figure 1

The Affective Depolarization Framework



Note. The process dimension represents three broad and interacting categories through which depolarizing change may unfold, including processes involving interpersonal interaction and engagement, understanding and interpretation, and emotional response and regulation. The

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

outcome dimension represents four distinct but related indicators of affective depolarization. The two dimensions are conceptually linked and mutually informative. Processes may contribute to multiple outcomes, and outcomes may emerge through multiple process pathways.

Process Dimension

The process dimension in Figure 1 formalizes that synthesis by organizing the recurring processes that appear in the literature into three broad categories: interpersonal, cognitive, and affective (Fishkin et al., 2021; Hartman et al., 2022; Hruschka & Appel, 2026; Levendusky & Stecula, 2021; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Santoro & Broockman, 2022). These categories are not sequential stages, but interacting processes that may co-occur and mutually reinforce each other. Further, these categories are not intended to imply deterministic relationships. Rather, the framework identifies plausible pathways linking multiple interacting processes to multiple forms of affective depolarization.

- Interpersonal processes refer to direct engagement across political differences through dialogue, deliberation, perspective exchange, and other forms of relationship-building that create opportunities for depolarizing change (Fishkin et al., 2021; Hartman et al., 2022; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Santoro & Broockman, 2022).

- Cognitive processes involve changes in how individuals reason about political differences and interpret outgroup members and opposing viewpoints. These may include reconsidering previously unquestioned assumptions, recognizing complexity in opposing viewpoints, or entertaining the possibility that an outgroup position has merit (Fishkin et al., 2021; Hartman et al., 2022; Levendusky, 2018; Muradova & Arceneaux, 2022).

- Affective processes involve changes in emotional responses to political difference, including how individuals experience and regulate reactions to political opponents and opposing viewpoints. These may include the regulation of negative intergroup emotions through strategies such as cognitive reappraisal (Halperin et al., 2013; Halperin et al., 2014).

The three process categories are not inherently depolarizing, nor are they intended to correspond one-to-one with the four elements of the outcome dimension. Rather, they represent potential pathways through which depolarizing change may develop: any given process may contribute to multiple forms of depolarizing change, and any single outcome may emerge through multiple interacting processes.

Outcome Dimension

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

The outcome dimension of affective depolarization (Fig. 1) represents the four targets of change that appear throughout the depolarization literature. Some focus on reducing negative orientations toward outgroups and their members, while others emphasize developing positive regard, improving patterns of interaction, and shifting modes of social identification. Together, these forms of change provide a framework for organizing the diverse outcomes associated with depolarization.

Reduced Hostility

Reduced hostility refers to a decrease in negative affect toward political outgroups. This includes animosity, distrust, dislike, and social distance (Finkel et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2012; Iyengar et al., 2019). This form of change captures movement away from negative affect, but does not require the emergence of positive regard, relational connection, or a shift in the salience of political identity. The reduced hostility outcome most closely aligns with conventional measures of polarization, and therefore represents the form of affective depolarization most commonly captured in existing research.

Warmth and Humanization

Warmth and humanization reflects the presence of positive orientations rather than merely the absence of negative ones. This form of change therefore identifies movement beyond reduced hostility toward the development of positive orientations including empathy, recognition of shared humanity, and humanization (Muradova & Arceneaux, 2022; Paksoy & Huddy, 2026; Santoro & Broockman, 2022). While an individual may no longer dislike or distrust political opponents, they may still fail to engage with them constructively or they may continue to prioritize the relevance of political identity.

Improved Relational Engagement

Improved relational engagement addresses the quality of interpersonal interactions between outgroup members. This form of change captures the presence of relational trust, cooperation, civil engagement, prosocial communication, and constructive civic interaction (Hartman et al., 2022; Mathews & Ross, 2026). Individuals may display positive engagement with political opponents despite persistent ideological disagreement or an ongoing view that one's political identity is most relevant.

Diminished Identity-Based Division

Diminished identity-based division focuses on identity structures that may underlie political attitudes or behaviors. This form of change reflects a reduction in the extent to which political identity serves as a primary basis for social evaluation and interaction. It encompasses the recognition of identity complexity, recategorization of political outgroups and their members,

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

and increased identification with superordinate identities (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2014; Levendusky, 2018; Roccas & Brewer, 2002; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Therefore, diminished identity-based division concerns how individuals view social identities rather than how they feel about specific political opponents.

Levels of Analysis

In addition to encompassing process and outcome dimensions, affective depolarization may occur at different levels of analysis. Existing scholarship invokes the term in ways that imply changes within individuals (Baron et al., 2025; Gençer, 2026; Herzog, 2023; Hruschka & Appel, 2026; Khan & Siu, 2023), among individuals and between groups (Fong & Lee, 2023; Lee, 2020; Wang, 2026; Wurm, 2026), and across larger social or political systems (Erdoğan et al., 2026; Galais & Balinhas, 2025; Johnston, 2023; Rekker & Harteveld, 2024). These levels should not be conflated. A reduction in hostility experienced by an individual, an improvement in the quality of the relationship between political opponents, or a decline in aggregate affective polarization across a community each represent distinct phenomena. Distinguishing among levels of analysis therefore clarifies the particular locus of depolarization under examination.

Individual-Level Affective Depolarization

Individual-level affective depolarization refers to changes occurring within a person. These may include reductions in hostility toward political opponents, increased empathy, greater openness to alternative viewpoints, shifts in the salience of political identity, or combinations of these changes (Finkel et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2019; Muradova, 2021; Paksoy & Huddy, 2026). Much of the existing affective polarization literature operates primarily at this level, focusing on attitudes, perceptions, and emotional orientations held by individuals. Individual-level affective depolarization therefore captures how people think, feel, and make sense of political differences.

Relational-Level Affective Depolarization

Relational-level affective depolarization refers to changes occurring between individuals. Rather than focusing on internal attitudes alone, this level concerns changes that emerge within interpersonal relationships and interactions across political differences. Such changes may take multiple forms, including reduced hostility between political opponents, greater warmth or humanization, improved relational engagement, or diminished reliance on political identity in relating to others (Fishkin et al., 2021; Santoro & Broockman, 2022). Relational-level affective depolarization recognizes that depolarizing change can occur within relationships even when individuals continue to hold divergent political views.

Collective-Level Affective Depolarization

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

Collective-level affective depolarization refers to broader changes occurring within or between collective entities such as political groups, communities, social movements, and societies. At this level, depolarization is reflected not in individuals' attitudes or relationships, but in broader social and political change. Examples of this level include declines in population-level measures of affective polarization (Galais & Balinhas, 2025; Johnston, 2023; Rekker & Harteveld, 2024), improved relations between political groups or factions (Lee, 2020; Wang, 2026), and greater solidarity among previously divided outgroups (Fong & Lee, 2023). Conceptual reviews also invoke affective depolarization as a collective phenomenon characterized by reduced intergroup hostility and improved cross-group relations (Erdoğan et al., 2026). Collective-level affective depolarization therefore concerns the social manifestation of depolarization rather than individual experiences.

The dimensions and levels of analysis proposed here are distinct but complementary. Processes and outcomes associated with affective depolarization may manifest at multiple levels. For example, reduced hostility may occur within an individual, within a relationship, or throughout a society. Likewise, improvements in relational engagement between two individuals do not necessarily imply broader societal depolarization, just as aggregate declines in affective polarization do not establish that particular interpersonal relationships have changed. Inferences at one level should not be generalized to another. Recognizing these distinctions helps avoid conceptual ambiguity and align theory, measurement, and intervention design with the specific form and level of change being targeted.

Measuring Affective Depolarization

The multidimensional nature of affective depolarization has important implications for measurement. The broader polarization literature has highlighted conceptual, operational, and cross-contextual issues associated with polarization measures (Bramson et al., 2017; Druckman & Levendusky, 2019; Tichelbaecker et al., 2023). These concerns suggest similar challenges for the conceptualization and assessment of affective depolarization. With this in mind, measurement strategies should be aligned with both the dimension and the level of change under examination. Table 3 illustrates how different dimensions of affective depolarization may manifest across levels of analysis and identifies corresponding indicators and illustrative assessment strategies.

Table 3

Outcome Forms, Level Indicators, and Sample Assessment Approaches for Affective Depolarization

Outcome Form	Individual Indicators	Relational Indicators	Collective Indicators	Illustrative Assessments

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

Reduced Hostility	Less animosity, distrust, social distance	Reduced hostility in cross-partisan relationships	Reduced hostility between collective groups or factions	Feeling thermometers, social distance scales, outgroup evaluations
Warmth & Humanization	Empathy, recognition of shared humanity, positive regard toward political outgroups	Mutual understanding and humanization	Greater social acceptance of political or social outgroups	Empathy scales, humanization measures, outgroup evaluations
Improved Relational Engagement	Willingness to engage with political others	Trust, cooperation, prosocial communication	Civic cooperation, evidence of bridging ties	Trust measures, dialogue assessments, social network analysis
Diminished Identity-Based Division	Lower partisan identity salience	Less identity-based categorization	Reductions in social sorting	Identity salience scales, identity complexity measures

Note. The outcome forms represent types of depolarizing change, while the indicators and assessment approaches reflect states or conditions through which change may be observed. Evidence of such change may require comparison across time, conditions, or groups. The sample assessments listed are illustrative rather than exhaustive.

Existing research often assesses depolarization using indicators such as feeling thermometers and social distance measures (Druckman & Levendusky, 2019; Finkel et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2012; Iyengar et al., 2019). Such measures are generally well suited for evaluating reductions in hostility because they directly assess animosity, distrust, dislike, and social distance toward political opponents, but they may be insufficient for capturing other forms of affective depolarization. Consequently, this dimension represents the form of affective depolarization most readily captured by existing measurement approaches and most commonly examined in empirical research.

Measuring warmth and humanization requires capturing positive orientations toward political opponents rather than simply reductions in negative attitudes towards them. Empathy, recognition of humanity, and humanization represent qualitatively different phenomena from reduced hostility and therefore require distinct indicators and assessment strategies (Muradova & Arceneaux, 2022; Santoro & Broockman, 2022). Measures such as empathy scales and humanization measures may provide more direct evidence of change in this form than conventional indicators of affective polarization.

Improved relational engagement presents a different measurement challenge because this form concerns relationships rather than attitudes alone. Indicators such as trust, reciprocity, and constructive communication emerge through interaction and therefore might not be adequately captured through individual self-report measures (Hartman et al., 2022; Mathews & Ross, 2026).

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

Relational indicators can characterize engagement at a given point in time, while demonstrating that improvement may require comparison across time, conditions, or groups. Assessment of this form may therefore benefit from observational methods, discourse analysis, social network approaches, or other tools capable of capturing relational dynamics.

Measuring diminished identity-based division requires attention to how individuals and groups categorize themselves and others. Indicators focused exclusively on affective evaluations may overlook changes in identity salience, identity complexity, recategorization, or identification with superordinate groups (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2014; Levendusky, 2018; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Consequently, assessing this dimension requires measures of changes in the structure and relevance of political identity. Identity salience and identity complexity measures can provide such evidence, although assessment of diminished identity-based division may require comparison across time, conditions, or groups.

Table 3 highlights how indicators and assessment approaches associated with the four forms of depolarizing change within the outcome dimension differ substantially, underscoring the need for measurement strategies tailored to the particular form of change under examination. This is consistent with concerns regarding the measurement of affective polarization, where different indicators may capture different aspects of partisan affect (Druckman & Levendusky, 2019). As a result, no single indicator is likely to adequately measure affective depolarization in all its forms and levels. Therefore, the validity of depolarization research depends on the alignment between conceptualization, measurement, and level of analysis.

At the same time, Table 3 suggests that some dimensions of affective depolarization may be difficult to assess without examining interaction directly. Although the framework identifies relational-level affective depolarization as one locus of change, many depolarization interventions operate through communication itself. Interaction may therefore be more than a mechanism through which affective depolarization occurs; it may also constitute a context in which depolarization can be observed and analyzed. The implications of this perspective are considered in the following section.

Interactional Observation

If affective depolarization comprises both processes and outcomes, interaction itself becomes an important object of analysis, including the communicative processes that may lead to depolarizing change. Researchers may examine communicative behaviors such as active listening, perspective-taking, and constructive engagement across political differences (Fishkin et al., 2021; Santoro & Broockman, 2022) as potential indicators of interpersonal, cognitive, or affective processes associated with depolarizing change, rather than relying solely on post hoc evidence of outcomes. Importantly, such communicative behaviors do not require ideological agreement, attitude change, or consensus. Consequently, interactional observation offers a

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

complementary approach to traditional outcome-based assessment by allowing researchers to examine how processes associated with affective depolarization unfold through communicative interaction.

Illustrative Application of the Framework

Consider a hypothetical study examining a structured conversation between individuals with opposing political views. During the exchange, participants engage in active listening, ask questions, and acknowledge aspects of each other's perspectives without changing their own policy positions. Within the proposed framework, these behaviors might provide evidence of interpersonal and cognitive processes potentially associated with depolarizing change, but would not necessarily establish that affective depolarization had occurred.

To assess the outcome of the intervention, researchers would need to examine whether the interaction was accompanied by reduced hostility, increased warmth or humanization, improved relational engagement, or diminished identity-based division. These forms of change need not occur together. Participants might, for example, report less hostility toward their outgroup member without developing greater warmth or willingness to engage in future interactions. Such findings would suggest change in one outcome domain rather than depolarization across all four.

The framework also directs attention to levels of analysis and evidentiary requirements. Observed interactional behaviors may illuminate relational processes, while individual attitude measures may capture changes in participants' evaluations of political opponents. Neither alone would establish collective-level change. Demonstrating improvement would require appropriate comparisons across time or conditions, and claims about persistence would require follow-up evidence.

Research Agenda

The framework this paper proposes suggests several directions for future scholarship. Conceptualizing affective depolarization as a multidimensional construct operating at multiple levels and potentially observable in interaction raises important conceptual, methodological, and empirical questions. Future research should focus on refining the construct, examining relationships between processes and outcomes, investigating and improving measurement strategies, and examining the mechanisms through which affective depolarization occurs.

Priority 1: Conceptual Clarification

First, additional conceptual work is needed to clarify the boundaries and dimensions of affective depolarization. The framework proposed here identifies four forms of depolarizing change within the outcome dimension that recur throughout the literature, but further research should examine whether these are exhaustive and how they relate to one another. Particular attention should be

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

given to distinguishing affective depolarization from related constructs such as civility, toleration, deliberative quality, social cohesion, and conflict resolution. Future research should also empirically examine the relationships among the proposed forms of change, including whether they emerge independently, sequentially, or reciprocally across different interventions and contexts. Research should also examine the relationship between process and outcome dimensions, including whether particular interpersonal, cognitive, or affective processes reliably precede, accompany, or reinforce particular forms of depolarizing change.

Priority 2: Measurement Development

Second, future scholarship should develop and validate measures capable of capturing the multidimensional nature of affective depolarization. Existing research often relies on indicators such as hostility and social distance, designed to assess affective polarization. While such measures remain valuable, they may not adequately reflect other dimensions such as warmth and humanization, relational improvement, and diminished identity-based division. Consistent with ongoing debates related to the measurement of affective polarization (Bramson et al., 2017; Druckman & Levendusky, 2019; Tichelbaecker et al., 2023), future work should investigate how different indicators relate to distinct dimensions and levels of affective depolarization.

Future scholarship should explore multimethod approaches that integrate established self-report instruments (e.g., feeling thermometers and social distance measures) with behavioral observation, discourse-based analysis, physiological indicators, and neurobiological measures to determine whether different assessment strategies capture complementary forms, levels, or processes of affective depolarization. Longitudinal and pre/post assessments may likewise help highlight which dimensions are present prior to intervention and which emerge over time.

Priority 3: Interactional Processes

Third, future research should examine the interactional dynamics of affective depolarization. While many depolarization interventions operate through dialogue, deliberation, and interpersonal engagement (Fishkin et al., 2021; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Santoro & Broockman, 2022), the literature reviewed here has tended to conceptualize affective depolarization in terms of static outcomes rather than the processes through which those outcomes emerge. Future research should examine how depolarizing processes unfold within interaction and whether practices such as active listening, perspective-taking, curiosity, and steelmanning function as indicators, mechanisms, or catalysts of affective depolarization. Greater use of observational and discourse-based methods may help illuminate the temporal and relational dynamics through which affective depolarization develops, stabilizes, or fails to emerge.

Ultimately, advancing the study of affective depolarization will require moving beyond the assumption that reductions in partisan hostility alone adequately capture depolarization. Greater

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

conceptual precision regarding what affective depolarization is, how it should be measured, and how it operates may enable researchers to more effectively evaluate interventions, compare findings across studies, and better understand the forms of change they seek to produce. By conceptualizing affective depolarization through complementary process and outcome dimensions that may manifest at multiple levels of analysis, the framework proposed here provides a foundation for future theory development, empirical investigation, and intervention design.

Conclusion

As the preceding review demonstrates, affective depolarization has appeared with increasing frequency in contemporary scholarship while remaining conceptually underdeveloped. Across the literature, the term has been used to describe a wide range of phenomena including reduced hostility, increased warmth and humanization toward political opponents, improved interpersonal and intergroup relations, diminished partisan identity salience, and overall declines in affective polarization. Yet across the literature reviewed here, these outcomes have rarely been distinguished from one another, and no integrative framework was identified that clarifies their relationships and organizes the construct in a conceptually coherent manner. Moreover, the evolution of the terminology observed during the literature search (including the replacement of "affective depolarization" with alternative language in at least one subsequently published article) further suggests conceptual instability.

This paper argued that affective depolarization should not be understood simply as the inverse of affective polarization. Rather, it may be understood as a multidimensional phenomenon encompassing both processes through which depolarizing change happens and the distinct forms through which such change is expressed. The framework proposed here distinguishes and integrates complementary process and outcome dimensions, recognizes that these may operate at multiple levels of analysis, and provides a common conceptual language for organizing existing scholarship and guiding future investigation. Beyond clarifying the construct, the proposed framework offers one foundation for aligning conceptualization with measurement, integrating findings across disciplines, and encouraging greater conceptual consistency across depolarization research.

Ultimately, greater conceptual precision regarding affective depolarization is more than a theoretical concern. Scholars, practitioners, and organizations increasingly seek to reduce political hostility and strengthen democratic coexistence, yet such efforts often operate from different understandings of what successful depolarization entails. Clarifying the nature of affective depolarization may therefore improve the design, implementation, evaluation, and comparison of interventions while providing a stronger foundation for future research and theory development. As the problem of political polarization continues to challenge democratic societies, developing a clearer understanding of affective depolarization represents an important

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

step toward building a cumulative science of how political difference can be navigated without requiring consensus, and how democratic societies might sustain disagreement without descending into acrimony, dehumanization, and social fragmentation.

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

References

Abramowitz, A. I., & Saunders, K. L. (2008). Is polarization a myth? *The Journal of Politics, 70*(2), 542–555. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022381608080493

Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Addison-Wesley.

Baron, H., Blair, R. A., Choi, D. D., Gamboa, L., Gottlieb, J., Robinson, A. L., Rosenzweig, S. C., Turnbull, M. M., & West, E. A. (2025). Couples therapy for a divided America: Assessing the effects of reciprocal group reflection on partisan polarization. *Political Behavior, 47*(3), 1363–1388. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-024-09993-z

Bohm, D. (2004). *On dialogue.* Routledge. (Work originally published in 1996)

Bramson, A., Grim, P., Singer, D. J., Berger, W. J., Sack, G., Fisher, S., Flocken, C., & Holman, B. (2017). Understanding polarization: Meanings, measures, and model evaluation. *Philosophy of Science, 84*(1), 115–159. https://doi.org/10.1086/688938

Buber, M. (1971). *I and thou.* Touchstone. (Work originally published in 1923)

Combs, A., Tierney, G., Guay, B., Merhout, F., Bail, C. A., Hillygus, D. S., & Volfovsky, A. (2022). *Anonymous cross-party conversations can decrease political polarization: A field experiment on a mobile chat platform* [Preprint]. SocArXiv. https://doi.org/10.31235/osf.io/cwgu5

Combs, A., Tierney, G., Guay, B., Merhout, F., Bail, C. A., Hillygus, D. S., & Volfovsky, A. (2023). Reducing political polarization in the United States with a mobile chat platform. *Nature Human Behaviour, 7*(9), 1454–1461. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-023-01655-0

Druckman, J. N., & Levendusky, M. S. (2019). What do we measure when we measure affective polarization? *Public Opinion Quarterly, 83*(1), 114–122. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfz003

Druckman, J. N., Gubitz, S. R., Lloyd, A. M., & Levendusky, M. S. (2019). How incivility on partisan media (de) polarizes the electorate. *The Journal of Politics, 81*(1), 291–295. https://doi.org/10.1086/699912

Erdoğan, E., Jaworsky, B. N., Álvares, C., Bodroža, B., Butkevičienė, E., Cela, E., Dodeigne, J., Fahmy, S. S., Schäfer, S. H., Scott, G., Velasco Arias, G., & Zamora Medina, R. (2026). The evolving study of political polarization. *Open Research Europe, 6*, Article 93. https://doi.org/10.12688/openreseurope.23252.1

Finkel, E. J., Bail, C. A., Cikara, M., Ditto, P. H., Iyengar, S., Klar, S., Mason, L., McGrath, M. C., Nyhan, B., Rand, D. G., Skitka, L. J., Tucker, J. A., Van Bavel, J. J., Wang, C. S., & Druckman, J. N. (2020). Political sectarianism in America. *Science, 370*(6516), 533–536. https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abe1715

Fishkin, J., Siu, A., Diamond, L., & Bradburn, N. (2021). Is deliberation an antidote to extreme partisan polarization? Reflections on "America in one room." *American Political Science Review, 115*(4), 1464–1481. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055421000642

Fiorina, M. P., & Abrams, S. J. (2008). Political polarization in the American public. *Annual Review of Political Science, 11*(1), 563–588. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.11.053106.153836

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

Fong, I. W. Y., & Lee, F. L. F. (2023). Disagreement resolution on digital communication platform in a self-directed political consumerism campaign. *Information, Communication & Society, 26*(15), 3035–3053. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2022.2131365

Gaertner, S. L., & Dovidio, J. F. (2014). *Reducing intergroup bias: The common ingroup identity model*. Psychology Press.

Galais, C., & Balinhas, D. (2025). Affective polarization in the face of crisis: The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and de-escalation policies in Spain. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research, 37*(1), Article edae059. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijpor/edae059

Gençer, A. Ş. (2026). Rethinking "them": Challenging out-group stereotypes in backsliding democracies [Preprint]. Research Square. https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-9249745/v1

Halperin, E., Porat, R., Tamir, M., & Gross, J. J. (2013). Can emotion regulation change political attitudes in intractable conflicts? From the laboratory to the field. *Psychological Science, 24*(1), 106–111. https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797612452572

Halperin, E., Pliskin, R., Saguy, T., Liberman, V., & Gross, J. J. (2014). Emotion regulation and the cultivation of political tolerance: Searching for a new track for intervention. *Journal of Conflict Resolution, 58*(6), 1110–1138. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002713492636

Hartman, R., Blakey, W., Womick, J., Bail, C. A., Finkel, E. J., Han, H., Sarrouf, J., Schroeder, J., Sheeran, P., Willer, R., & Gray, K. (2022). Interventions to reduce partisan animosity. *Nature Human Behaviour, 6*(9), 1194–1205. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-022-01442-3

Herzog, L. (2023). *Citizen knowledge: Markets, experts, and the infrastructure of democracy*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197681718.001.0001

Hoffman, L. H., Dawson, W. E., & Ifeanyichukwu, E. A. (2025). Do civil dialogue interventions on U.S. college campuses have any impact? A field experiment examining different types of interventions. *SN Social Sciences, 5*, Article 181. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-025-01223-5

Hruschka, T. M., & Appel, M. (2026). Reducing political polarization through conversations with artificial intelligence. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication, 31*(2), zmag003. https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmag003

Iyengar, S., Sood, G., & Lelkes, Y. (2012). Affect, not ideology: A social identity perspective on polarization. *Public Opinion Quarterly, 76*(3), 405–431. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfs038

Iyengar, S., Lelkes, Y., Levendusky, M., Malhotra, N., & Westwood, S. J. (2019). The origins and consequences of affective polarization in the United States. *Annual Review of Political Science, 22*(1), 129–146. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051117-073034

Jabareen, Y. (2009). Building a conceptual framework: Philosophy, definitions, and procedure. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 8*(4), 49–62. https://doi.org/10.1177/1609406909008004

Johnston, R. (2023). Affective polarization in the Canadian party system, 1988–2021. *Canadian Journal of Political Science, 56*, 372–395. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0008423923000112

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

Jost, J. T., Nam, H. H., Amodio, D. M., & Van Bavel, J. J. (2014). Political neuroscience: The beginning of a beautiful friendship. *Political Psychology, 35*(1), 3–42. https://doi.org/10.1111/pops.12162

Khan, Y., & Siu, A. (2023). How college students can depolarize: Evidence for political moderation within homogeneous groups. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 29*(2), 137–154. https://doi.org/10.3998/mjcsl.5140

Kubin, E., & von Sikorski, C. (2021). The role of (social) media in political polarization: a systematic review. *Annals of the International Communication Association, 45*(3), 188–206. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2021.1976070

Lee, F. (2020). Solidarity in the anti-extradition bill movement in Hong Kong. *Critical Asian Studies, 52*(1), 18–32. https://doi.org/10.1080/14672715.2020.1700629

Lee, F. L. F. (2025). *Pro-democracy contention in Hong Kong: Relational dynamics between the umbrella movement and the anti-extradition protests*. State University of New York Press. https://doi.org/10.1515/9798855801101

Lees, J., & Cikara, M. (2020). Inaccurate group meta-perceptions drive negative out-group attributions in competitive contexts. *Nature Human Behaviour, 4*(3), 279–286. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-019-0766-4

Levendusky, M. S. (2018). Americans, not partisans: Can priming American national identity reduce affective polarization? *The Journal of Politics, 80*(1), 59–70. https://doi.org/10.1086/693987

Levendusky, M. S., & Stecula, D. A. (2021). *We need to talk: How cross-party dialogue reduces affective polarization*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009042192

Ludwig, K., & Müller, P. (2022). Does social media use promote political mass polarization? A structured literature review. In B. Krämer & P. Müller (Eds.), *Questions of communicative change and continuity* (pp. 118–166). Nomos. https://doi.org/10.5771/9783748928232-118

Mason, L. (2018). *Uncivil agreement: How politics became our identity*. University of Chicago Press.

Mathews, G., & Ross, K. (2026). Mapping the US bridgebuilding field: Situating organizations in the ecosystem of social change. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly, 44*(1), 65–76. https://doi.org/10.1002/crq.70033

McCoy, J., & Somer, M. (2019). Toward a theory of pernicious polarization and how it harms democracies: Comparative evidence and possible remedies. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 681*(1), 234–271. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716218818782

Mezirow, J. (1978). Perspective transformation. *Adult Education*, *28*(2), 100–110. https://doi.org/10.1177/074171367802800202

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

Mezirow, J. (2000). Learning to think like an adult: Core concepts of transformation theory. In J. Mezirow & Associates (Eds.), *Learning as transformation: Critical perspectives on a theory in progress* (pp. 3–33). Jossey-Bass.

Mladenović, I. (2023). The problem of political polarization and a way out of it. In N. Cekić (Ed.), *Virtues and vices: Between ethics and epistemology* (pp. 265–288). Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade.

Muradova, L. (2021). Seeing the other side? Perspective-taking and reflective political judgements in interpersonal deliberation. *Political Studies, 69*(3), 644–664. https://doi.org/10.1177/0032321720916605

Muradova, L., & Arceneaux, K. (2022). Reflective political reasoning: Political disagreement and empathy. *European Journal of Political Research, 61*(3), 740–761. https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12490

Oliver-Blackburn, B. M., & Chatham-Carpenter, A. (2023). "But I don't know if I want to talk to you": Strategies to foster conversational receptiveness across the United States' political divide. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 51*(1), 55–71. https://doi.org/10.1080/00909882.2022.2093122

Orhan, Y. E. (2022). The relationship between affective polarization and democratic backsliding: comparative evidence. *Democratization, 29*(4), 714–735. https://doi.org/10.1080/13510347.2021.2008912

Paksoy, C., & Huddy, L. (2026). Perspective-taking and partisan depolarization in the U.S. and Turkey. *Political Behavior*. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11109-026-10175-2

Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2006). A meta-analytic test of intergroup contact theory. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 90*(5), 751–783. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.90.5.751

Pew Research Center. (2022, August 9). *As partisan hostility grows, signs of frustration with the two-party system*. https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2022/08/09/as-partisan-hostility-grows-signs-of-frustration-with-the-two-party-system

Rekker, R., & Harteveld, E. (2024). Understanding factual belief polarization: the role of trust, political sophistication, and affective polarization. A*cta Politica, 59*(3), 643–670. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41269-022-00265-4

Roccas, S., & Brewer, M. B. (2002). Social identity complexity. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 6*(2), 88–106. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327957PSPR0602_01

Rogers, C. R. (1957). The necessary and sufficient conditions of therapeutic personality change. *Journal of Consulting Psychology, 21*(2), 95–103. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0045357

Santoro, E., & Broockman, D. E. (2022). The promise and pitfalls of cross-partisan conversations for reducing affective polarization: Evidence from randomized experiments. *Science Advances, 8(*25), eabn5515. https://doi.org/10.1126/sciadv.abn551

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved

Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. G. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 33–47). Brooks/Cole.

Tichelbaecker, T., Gidron, N., Horne, W., & Adams, J. (2023). What do we measure when we measure affective polarization across countries? *Public Opinion Quarterly, 87*(3), 803–815. https://doi.org/10.1093/poq/nfad033

Torraco, R. J. (2016). Writing integrative reviews of the literature: Methods and purposes. *International Journal of Adult Vocational Education and Technology (IJAVET), 7*(3), 62–70. https://doi.org/10.4018/IJAVET.2016070106

Van Bavel, J. J., & Pereira, A. (2018). The partisan brain: An identity-based model of political belief. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences, 22*(3), 213–224. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tics.2018.01.004

Van Bavel, J. J., Robertson, C. E., Del Rosario, K., Rasmussen, J., & Rathje, S. (2024). Social media and morality. *Annual Review of Psychology, 75*(1), 311–340. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-022123-110258

Vera-Revilla, C. Y., Grundy-López, R. E., & Zegarra-Florez, G. (2025). Affective polarization and social media: Theories, models, and contemporary dynamics. *Science of Law, 2025*(2), 86–94. https://doi.org/10.55284/5zcgtk20

Voelkel, J. G., Chu, J., Stagnaro, M. N., Mernyk, J. S., Redekopp, C., Pink, S. L., Druckman, J. N., Rand, D. G., & Willer, R. (2023). Interventions reducing affective polarization do not necessarily improve anti-democratic attitudes. *Nature Human Behaviour, 7*(1), 55–64. https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-022-01466-9

Wang, Y. (2026). Pro-democracy contention in Hong Kong: Relational dynamics between the umbrella movement and the anti-extradition protests. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 1–3. https://doi.org/10.1080/00472336.2026.2618650

Wurm, G. J. (2026). Do bridging organizations bridge? Partisanship and cross-partisan ties in the U.S. political depolarization field. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 1–39. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-026-09580-6

https://doi.org/10.33774/apsa-2026-tkdt5 **ORCID:** https://orcid.org/0009-0008-5944-8420 Content not peer-reviewed by APSA. **License:** All Rights Reserved