



Sit Down, Be Humble: Buffering Political Polarization and Authoritarianism in the United States

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Background/Design

- Authoritarian attitudes appear to be on the rise in the United States
- Although historically researchers have been concerned exclusively with Right-wing Authoritarianism (RWA), recent research and public demonstrations have shown a potential rise in Left-wing Authoritarianism. Indeed, many researchers argue that LWA exists in the same capacity as RWA and may even manifest from similar psychological processes (Authoritarian Symmetry Hypothesis; Conway et al., 2017).
- In the present study, we analyzed 3 distinct variables related to political attitudes in order to determine how authoritarianism (both RWA and LWA) may manifest between American political parties.
 1. **Conservatism:** Political Conservatism was measured using the Social and Economic Conservatism Scale (SECS; Everett, 2013)
 2. **Political Intellectual Humility:** PIH measures the extent to which one recognizes that she/he may be wrong their political beliefs (Leary et al., 2017)
 3. **Political Affective Polarization:** PAP indicates the extent to which one experiences negative affective states (i.e., anger, disgust, distress, fear) when thinking about a member of the opposing political party (Bowes et al., 2020)

Participants and Procedure

- Participants were 527 individuals (34.3% female) with an age range from 21 to 72 (M = 37.27, SD = 11.054).
- 67% Caucasian/white, 15% African American/black, 7% Asian, and 6.3% Hispanic.
- Participants were required to be currently residing in the United States.
- 53.1% of participants identified as Democrat, 35.3% as Republican, and 11.6% as "other".
- All participants completed the study using the website Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk; mturk.com)
- **For all analyses, average scores were determined for each variable. Indirect Effects analyses were conducted using SPSS macro PROCESS (Hayes, 2017)**

Correlation Analyses: Republicans (n = 186)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Conservatism	(.74)				
2. Political Intellectual Humility	.03	(.87)			
3. Political Affective Polarization	.24*	.27*	(.93)		
4. Right-wing Authoritarianism	.39*	-.24*	.22*	(.86)	
5. Left-wing Authoritarianism	-.49*	.26*	.25*	-.16*	(.79)

*indicates significant at $p < .05$

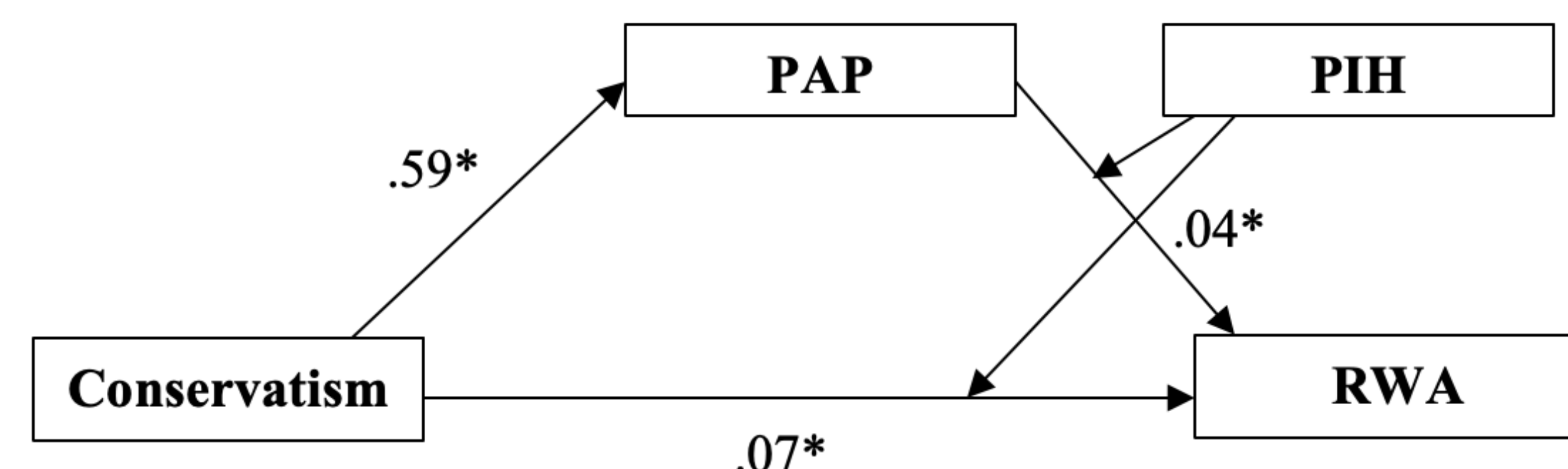
Correlation Analyses: Democrats (n = 280)

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Conservatism	(.86)				
2. Political Intellectual Humility	.09	(.87)			
3. Political Affective Polarization	.31*	-.10	(.93)		
4. Right-wing Authoritarianism	.68*	-.11	.26*	(.95)	
5. Left-wing Authoritarianism	-.37*	-.28*	.29*	-.23*	(.79)

*indicates significant at $p < .05$

Indirect Effects: Buffering RWA

Moderated Mediation Analysis:
PAP mediates the relationship between Conservatism and RWA for Republicans. This effect is moderated by PIH.

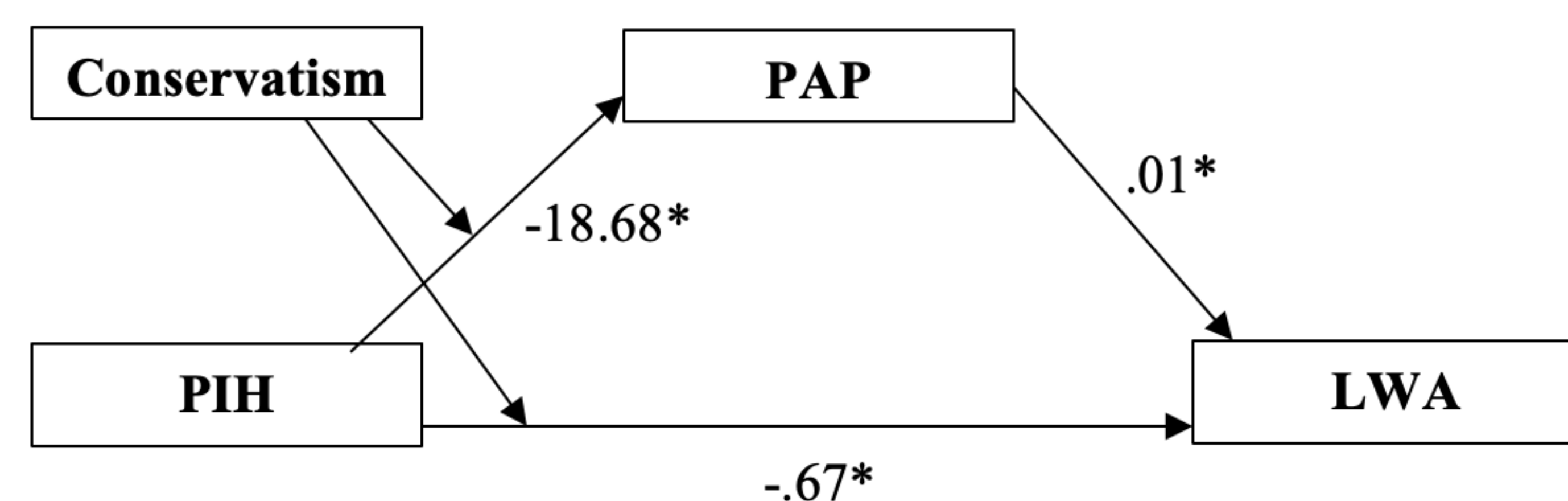


Significant index of moderated mediation: $-.0052 [-.0122, -.0012]$
Significant moderation of PIH on RWA~PAP: $-.0088 [-.0133, -.0042]$
Significant moderation of PIH on RWA~Conservatism: $-.0144 [-.0252, -.0035]$
Indirect Effect at 3 levels of PIH:
25%: $.0084 [.0027, .0176]$
50%: $.0043 [.0011, .0096]$
75%: $.0009 [-.0029, .0052]$

*indicates significant at $p < .05$

Indirect Effects: Buffering LWA

Moderated Mediation Analysis:
PAP mediates the relationship between PIH and LWA. This effect is moderated by conservatism.



Significant index of moderated mediation: $.0036 [.0017, .0055]$
Significant moderation of Conservatism on PAP~PIH: $.3114 [.1703, .4526]$
Significant moderation of Conservatism on LWA~PIH: $.0100 [.0064, .0137]$
Indirect Effect at 3 levels of Conservatism:
Liberal: $-.0510 [-.0932, -.0096]$
Moderate: $.0104 [-.0269, .0494]$
Conservative: $.0606 [.0092, .1162]$

*indicates significant at $p < .05$

Main Findings

PAP partially explains the relationship between political attitudes and Authoritarianism.

- PAP was associated with higher levels of both RWA and LWA for republicans and democrats, alike.
- The more conservative a republican was, the more likely she/he was to endorse RWA. This was explained indirectly through negative affective attitudes towards democrats/liberals.
- In general, participants who were intellectually humble were less likely to endorse LWA. For liberals, high levels of humility decreased affective polarization towards conservatives, which in turn, decreased LWA attitudes.

PIH can buffer authoritarian attitudes.

- Political intellectual humility was associated with lower LWA for democrats and lower RWA for republicans.
- Republicans who expressed higher levels of conservatism were more likely to endorse RWA. However, at high levels of PIH, this relationship did not exist.
- Similarly, republicans who expressed higher levels of PAP were more likely to endorse RWA. However, at high levels of PIH, this relationship did not exist.

Future Directions

- Look into alternative measures for RWA and LWA
- Examine relationship between liberalism-conservatism and political party alignment
- Illuminate the difference in relationship of PIH and PAP between political parties
- Introduce personality variables as potential moderators of political attitudes

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Link to Zoom Session: <https://auburn.zoom.us/j/81648705859>