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Partisan Misperceptions and Conflict
Escalation: Survey Evidence from a
Tribal/Local Government Conflict

Keith G. Allred, Kessely Hong,
and Joseph P. Kalt

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SURVEY EVIDENCE FROM A TRIBAL/LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONFLICT

KEITH G. ALLRED
Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
79 JFK Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Tel: (617) 495-4337
keith_allred@harvard.edu

KESSELY HONG
Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
79 JFK Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Tel: (617) 495-0459
kessely_hong@harvard.edu

JOSEPH P. KALT
Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
79 JFK Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
Tel: (617) 495-4966
joseph_kalt@harvard.edu

Note: Order of authorship was determined alphabetically

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Abstract

Prior research demonstrates that partisans to a conflict tend to have an exaggerated sense of the extremism of their opponents' opinions regarding the issues under dispute. In this study, we examine an ongoing conflict between the Nez Perce Tribe and local non-Tribal governments that operate within the boundaries of the Nez Perce Reservation. This survey is different from previous research in two important ways. First, we distinguish between the officials and constituents on each side of the conflict. Second, compared to other conflicts studied, the current conflict has greater personal relevance for those surveyed. The conflict in question is not about abstract policies or third parties, but rather about specific potential actions that directly benefit one side at the other side's expense. An affinity for actions that benefit one's own side to the other side's harm we call "offensiveness" and an antipathy toward actions that harm one's own side to the other side's benefit we call "defensiveness." The results indicated that participants' themselves were more defensive than offensive. However, participants consistently exaggerated the offensiveness of the other side's officials, but not the other side's constituents. Participants tend to underestimate the defensiveness of the other side for both officials and constituents.

KEY WORDS: partisan perceptions, ethnic conflict, escalation

Most conflicts are rooted in genuinely divergent preferences between two or more parties. The existence of a wide preference gap can make it difficult to resolve the conflict for multiple reasons. First, and most obviously, highly divergent preferences make it more challenging to find a mutually acceptable solution. This, in turn, can lead to a sense of frustration or the assumption that negotiations are futile. Additionally, most people are "naïve realists"—they believe that they see the world as it "really is," and that anyone else who is reasonable should be able to see it that way, too (Jones & Nisbett, 1971). Thus, when they learn that others have opposing opinions, they are likely to conclude that this is a result of these others being irrational or biased in favor of their own self-interest (Bar-Tal & Geva, 1986; Fisher & Ury, 1981). This, also, can serve to dissuade the parties from attempting or concluding a negotiation.

However, perceived preferences, not just actual preferences, are also an important influence on partisans' willingness to work together toward mutually acceptable solutions. Just as with actual preference differences, perceived differences can make it hard for the parties to find common ground or to feel that their counterparts are behaving in a reasonable fashion. According to Keltner and Robinson, "Imagined extremism …undermines … negotiations. Negotiators assume their opponents' interests are hostile and antithetical to their own, commonly failing to perceive and build negotiations upon shared beliefs, goals, and interests" (1996, p.103). In a series of studies covering everything from the abortion debate to the Howard Beach incident to the Western Cannon dispute,[1] they show that parties to a conflict tend to exaggerate the extremity of the other side's preferences (Robinson, *et al.*, 1995; Keltner & Robinson, 1996).

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[1] The "Howard Beach incident" refers to the 1986 death of a black man who was killed by a passing car while being chased by a group of white men. The Western Cannon dispute refers to a debate over college textbook selections between traditional versus revisionist English professors.

In the present study, we expand upon the previous work on partisan perceptions to try to gain a more accurate and nuanced picture of the ways in which partisans to a dispute are apt to misconstrue the preferences of their opponents.

This study is different from past research in two important ways. First, we distinguish between the officials and constituents within the same side of a dispute to study how actual and perceived preferences in a conflict situation vary according to an individual's status within a group or party. Specifically, we look at whether officials are apt to hold different preferences and motivations than their constituents, or to be perceived differently than their constituents by members of the other side. We use the word official to denote anyone in a position of public authority within a group, and the word constituent to refer to anyone who is a member of a group but does not hold a position of public authority. It is relevant to investigate whether there is anything special about the preferences of officials in a conflict setting, or the way officials' preferences and motivations are perceived by others, because typically it is officials and not constituents who take part in the negotiation process.

Another way in which this study represents a departure from prior work is that it involves an ongoing political conflict of greater direct and immediate personal relevance to the parties. Unlike the Robinson and Keltner studies mentioned above in which participants are asked to self-identify with one group or another based on their personal opinions, in this case membership in either side of the dispute is a matter of birthright rather than choice. Thus, the participants' sense of identity is permanently tied up with one side. Furthermore, the participants all live within the same area and most know each other, so their opponents are real people rather than abstract figures of their imagination. In addition, the questions we ask the participants to evaluate all invoke proposed actions whereby the participants themselves would stand to directly

gain or lose. We use the term "offensive" to describe an affinity for proposals that benefit one's own side at the expense of the other side, and the term "defensive" to describe an antipathy toward proposals that harm one's own side to the benefit of the other side.

This paper is limited in that we focus only on partisan perceptions of the other side, and not on participants' perceptions of the opinions of everyone else on their own side. Examining perceptions of one's own side is an important piece to add in order to gain a more complete understanding of the entire perceived gap between the two sides. We leave it out here for the sake of brevity and clarity.

Actual partisan preferences

It seems obvious that both officials and constituents will normally show greater preference for outcomes that favor their own group's ideals than will the officials and constituents of the opposing group. Similarly, they should dislike proposals that work against their own group more than the other side would. This intuitive understanding is supported by numerous studies, including those by Keltner and Robinson (1997) and Robinson, *et al.* (1995) mentioned above.

Hypothesis 1: There are actual partisan differences in opinion between two opposing sides to a conflict: members of one side favor proposals that help their side more than the other side does, and oppose proposals that hurt their side more than the other side does.

Partisan differences are assumed to generate real differences in opinion regarding a conflict situation. One could ask whether role differences, i.e. being an official as opposed to being a constituent, will also have a significant effect on opinions. This question has not been researched as thoroughly, although there are several studies that may relate to the answer.

In a 1966 study, Luttbeg and Zeigler compare the opinions of the administrative leaders of the Oregon Education Association with the opinions of the teachers who make up the

organization's membership, and find that while both can be characterized as "liberal," the leaders are more extreme on the liberal end than the teachers (Luttbeg & Zeigler, 1966). Thus, this is an example of a conflict where the officials are more extreme than the constituents. Some additional lines of research which help explain why this might be the case are King and Zeckhauser's recent work on the ideological extremity of elected party leaders in the US Congress (1999), Stoner's master's thesis describing the "risky shift" phenomenon (1961), and Janis' concept of "groupthink" (1982).

In a study covering party leaders in the US Congress from 1901 to 1990, King and Zeckhauser find that approximately 75% of leaders are more extreme than their party's constituents. They explain this tendency by pointing out that these leaders serve a critical function as negotiators on behalf of their party. They argue that when leaders are negotiators, "their personal ideologies will serve to anchor negotiations, implying that parties will have incentives to appoint extreme leaders" (1999). To the extent that ability to negotiate with the other side is considered an important factor in the selection of officials on both sides of the Nez Perce conflict, we might expect that officials will be more extreme in favor of their own side than their average constituent.

While King and Zeckhauser describe why constituents may intentionally select ideologically extreme representatives, research by Stoner and Janis explains how officials' views may become more extreme once they take office. Stoner finds that participants presented with a decision-making scenario involving risk tend to favor riskier options after group discussion than they do before group discussion (1961). Subsequent studies show that the risky shift holds only when initial pre-discussion opinions favor risk; when initial opinions favor caution, then a cautious shift will occur (Nordhoy, 1962; Teger and Pruitt, 1967). In other words, "group

discussion moves decisions to more extreme points *in the direction of the original inclination*. Group discussion produces polarization" (Brown, 1986). The processes at work in causing the risky shift in discussions involving risk are also likely to cause individuals participating in discussions about conflict to hold more extreme, or polarized, opinions after the discussion than before the discussion. As with the risky shift, this will occur when the original opinions of group members are already leaning in the same direction as each other, and will produce a shift toward greater extremism in that same direction.

Two explanations commonly offered for the risky shift following group discussion are "social comparison" and "persuasive arguments." The idea behind social comparison is that people think it is good to be risky (or cautious) in certain situations, and form their private opinions about what to do in that situation accordingly; during group discussion, they learn that their initial opinion is or is not risky (or cautious) in comparison to the opinions of others, so those with opinions on the low end are likely to shift out. In other words, group discussion changes their reference point of what it means to be risky (or cautious), so people change their opinions in order to continue to see themselves as risky (or cautious) (Brown, 1986). In a conflict setting, the spectrum of risky to cautious is replaced by a spectrum favoring one side or the other on a given issue. When individuals who consider themselves to be partisan (i.e. to favor their own side) sit down to a group discussion with other people who favor the same side, some will learn that they are not as partisan as others. Just as with the risky shift, through social comparison these individuals may change their opinion to be more extreme in the direction favoring their side so that they can maintain their self-image of being a strong supporter of their own cause.

The other explanation for the risky shift, persuasive arguments, refers to the fact that during a group discussion in which most group members exhibit a similar preference, e.g. towards risk, many arguments will be offered in favor of that preference. This expands the total pool of arguments available to individual group members in favor of this preference, without similarly expanding the arguments against it, thus giving them even more reasons to strengthen their initial preference (Brown, 1986). When partisan individuals discuss a conflict with members of their own side, they are likely to enumerate many arguments favoring their own group, and few arguments favoring their opponents, and thus are likely to convince each other to be even more in favor of their own side.

As opposed to one-off discussions involving a risky scenario with a number of strangers in a lab setting, real-world discussions in a partisan context, in which group members not only know one another but also consider themselves to be members of an "ingroup" pitted against a threatening "outgroup," may be even more likely to produce polarization. In the real-world partisan setting, group members are more likely to respect each other's opinions, and care about what other group members think of them. Thus, they stand a greater chance of succumbing to what Janis terms "groupthink": an inflated opinion of one's own group's morality and invulnerability, a lack of attention to disconfirming information, and pressure to demonstrate unquestioning allegiance to the group's position (Janis, 1982).

Returning to the question posed at the beginning of this section as to whether officials or constituents are more likely to hold more extreme views about a conflict, we argue that officials will hold more extreme views than their constituents because (1) they may be chosen specifically for their extreme partisan views regarding the conflict and (2) on average, they are more likely to engage in partisan discussions of the conflict than are their constituents. Officials must represent

their constituents, so it is their duty to discuss and address any conflict affecting their community; constituents may choose to discuss a conflict, but they are under no obligation to do so. Also, discussions by constituents are less likely to offer an array of persuasive arguments than are discussions by officials who are formally convened to deliberate an issue rather than just vent about it. Thus, to the extent that officials are chosen to serve as negotiators and that officials are more likely to discuss issues related to the conflict than constituents, officials are more likely to hold extreme views.

Hypothesis 2: Officials are more extreme than their own constituents: officials are both more offensive and more defensive than their constituents in that they are more strongly in favor of proposals that benefit their side and more strongly against proposals that harm their side.

The first hypothesis asserts that partisans will have different opinions regarding favorable versus unfavorable proposals—namely, partisans are expected to respond much more positively to proposals that benefit their side (offensiveness) than to proposals that harm their side (defensiveness). Another question about actual preferences is whether these offensive and defensive tendencies will significantly differ in strength: will partisans be more offensive or more defensive?

Tversky and Kahneman's concept of "loss aversion," which describes their finding that most people care more about avoiding potential losses than they do about winning potential gains, may shed some light on this question. The basic idea is that people evaluate potential outcomes relative to a reference point. Any outcome that is worse than the reference point is considered to be a loss, and any outcome that is better than the reference point is considered to be a gain. Loss aversion says that, in the minds of most people, "losses loom larger than corresponding gains." (Tversky & Kahneman, 1991, p.1039)

Loss aversion occurs because feelings of pain and pleasure are asymmetric, with the pain of suffering a loss being greater than the pleasure felt at receiving a corresponding gain (1991). Various studies on people's hypothetical and real willingness to pay (WTP) for a good they do not have versus their willingness to accept (WTA) compensation for giving up a good they do have show that, on average, WTP is lower than WTA for the same good: people judge the pain of giving up the good to be greater than the pleasure they would get by acquiring it (Cummings, Brookshire & Schulze, 1986; Herberlein and Bishop, 1985; Kahneman, Knetsch & Thaler, 1990; Loewenstein, 1998).

Some of the rationale behind this can be provided by Samuelson and Zeckhauser's concept of the "status quo bias" (1987). They use this phrase to describe people's sense of attachment to things they already possess, and their unwillingness to give up what they already have. The status quo bias has been demonstrated in numerous studies, one of the most notable being Kahneman, Knetsch, and Thaler (1990). The status quo is generally the reference point to which people compare potential gains and losses, hence a preference for the status quo over a loss and gain of equal market value is a demonstration of loss aversion.

In a negotiation setting, Tversky and Kahneman argue that concessions made by the other side are viewed as gains, whereas concessions made by one's own side are viewed as losses (1991). In the context of the present study, this implies that proposals that benefit one's own side at the expense of the other side are evaluated as gains and given less weight than proposals that harm one's own side to the benefit of the other side, which are considered to be losses. Thus, it is likely that partisans will care more about avoiding the losses than they will about receiving the gains and will therefore be more defensive than offensive. As Samuelson and

Zeckhauser note, "The status quo persists, and he who proposes a change merely brings wrath on his own head" (1987, p.51)

Work on various attributional biases provides further motivational support for the prediction of greater defensiveness than offensiveness. Allred (1999) coined the terms "accuser bias" and "bias of the accused": a person who has suffered some harm tends to assign greater responsibility for the act to the harm-doer than is deserved and thus suffers from the accuser bias; conversely, the harm-doer tends to claim less responsibility for the act than is deserved and thus suffers from the bias of the accused. These biases help explain a phenomenon known as "biased punctuation of conflict" whereby each side believes the conflict began with a harmful action committed by the other side, and that their own actions have been provoked (Bateson & Jackson, 1964; Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1967; Bies, Tripp & Kramer, 1997; Sillars, 1981). Taken together, the accuser bias/bias of the accused and biased punctuation of conflict both seem to suggest that people prefer to overplay their role as victim and to diminish any sense that they are an aggressive perpetrator. Thus, it makes sense that they would not describe themselves as aggressively supporting proposals that benefit their own side at the other side's expense as much as being concerned about proposals that harm their own side to the other side's benefit.

Hypothesis 3: Partisans to a conflict will be more defensive than offensive in that they will be more strongly opposed to proposals that harm their own side and benefit the other side than they will be in favor of proposals that harm the other side and benefit their own side.

Perceived partisan preferences

The Keltner and Robinson studies cited in the introduction and throughout this paper consistently show that parties to a conflict hold exaggerated perceptions of the extremism of the other side's preferences (1996; Robinson, *et al.*, 1995). As discussed above, this may be partly due to naïve realism, which may cause people to assume that anyone who opposes them is biased

or irrational. This, in turn, may lead to an assumption that one's opponents are incapable of

adopting a balanced perspective and therefore must be extremists (Keltner and Robinson, 1996).

Another explanation is that, in a conflict situation, people who feel strongly about an issue are

more likely to have an extreme preference regarding that issue, and to voice their preference,

than are people who do not feel strongly. Thus, extreme preferences become more salient than

less extreme preferences. Tversky and Kahneman show that when people consider the likelihood

of an event, they often assign greater probability or frequency to events that are salient, or easily

"available" in their memory (1973; Bazerman, 1998). Therefore, when parties to a conflict

consider the average extremity of preferences of the other side, they are likely to overweight

expressed preferences (which are likely to be on the extreme side), and thus are likely to assume

that average preferences are more extreme than they actually are.

*Hypothesis 4:   Partisans will be perceived by the other side as more extreme than they are: they
will be perceived as both more offensive and more defensive than they actually are.*

The next consideration is whether parties view their opposing party's officials and

constituents differently. There is a significant literature that might suggest that people do not

differentiate according to the status of a member of an opposing group when making judgments

about that member, because they tend to view all members of opposing groups as homogeneous

(Linville, Salovey, and Fischer, 1986 and others). However, these findings on outsider

perceptions of group homogeneity do not actually indicate that individuals perceive an opposing

group's leaders and constituents to be the same. Unless individuals are specifically asked about

leaders separately, they may assume that homogeneity questions pertain only to constituents.

There is evidence that supports the assertion that people usually perceive leaders of an

opposing group to be more extreme than constituents of the same group. In a study of

assumptions made by the Russian and American peoples during the Cold War about each other's

countries, Bronfenbrenner finds that people on both sides tend to see the other side's leaders as irrational fanatics and to assume that most citizens do not really sympathize with their leader or are being duped by their leader (1986). Similarly, and also in regard to US-Soviet relations, Burn & Oskamp find evidence for what they term the "blacktop illusion"— a perception that the other side's leaders are evil and manipulate the people (1989).

Hypothesis 5: Officials are *perceived by the other side as more extreme than their constituents*: *they are perceived as being both more offensive and more defensive than their constituents.*

Overview of the Nez Perce Conflict

The Nez Perce Indian Tribe has approximately 2,500 members and exists in what is now North-Central Idaho. The boundaries of the Nez Perce Reservation were originally defined by the Treaty of 1853; the reservation was subsequently reduced to approximately one-tenth of the original size by the Treaty of 1863, which marks the current reservation boundaries. In 1893, in accordance with the Dawes Act of 1887, the Nez Perce Tribe and the US government signed a treaty allowing for non-Indian settlers to homestead on land within the reservation. Since that time, non-Indian governmental entities have formed that govern the approximately 25,000 non-Indians currently living within the reservation.

Both the Tribe and the non-Indian governments within the reservation have their own separate decision-making and administrative bodies, and their own police forces. They share school districts and the provision of some services. The exercise of jurisdiction varies across issues and over time, and jurisdictional rights are not clearly defined. For example, in 1999 the Tribe withdrew the jurisdiction it had previously granted to local law enforcement agencies, and reserved that jurisdiction for the Nez Perce Tribal Police. Several of the non-Indian governmental entities (including three counties, nine cities, three school districts, and eight highway districts) have joined together to form the North Central Idaho Jurisdictional Alliance,

referred to hereafter as the Alliance. The explicit purpose of the Alliance is to work to eliminate the Tribe's jurisdiction over non- members. Some of the issues about which the Tribe and the Alliance dispute jurisdiction include: the right of the Tribal Police Force to apprehend non-Tribal members and the right of the non-Tribal police forces to apprehend Tribal members; the right of the Tribe to enforce the Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance (TERO: a tax on non-Tribal construction projects and mandatory preference in hiring for Indians); the right of the Tribe to permit or prohibit land development projects on the reservation; and the right of the Tribe to put land in trust, and thereby eliminate it from non-Tribal tax rolls.

The leaders of both sides frame their own position as protecting the rights of their members to self-government, and define the status quo, or baseline, according to their own preferences. The Tribe asserts it is exercising its right to govern within the boundaries of the Nez Perce Reservation when its policies directly affect non-Indians, and the Alliance argues that the jurisdiction of the Tribe has been diminished to only include Indian-owned land and that the Tribe has no authority over non-members. The Tribe is concerned with protecting its own sovereignty, and at a more fundamental level, its own existence; the Alliance is concerned with protecting itself from impositions by a Tribal government, in the selection of which non-Tribal members are not allowed to participate. Thus, both sides see themselves as maintaining the status quo and protecting their own rights, and they view the other side as threatening to take away their rights.

Method

Participants

Participants are divided into four categories according to partisanship (Tribe versus Alliance) and role (official versus constituent). For the purpose of this survey, Nez Perce Tribal

officials are defined as the Nez Perce Executive Council, various Tribal managers (e.g. of gaming, education, health, etc.), Tribal police officials, Tribal prosecutors and judges, Tribal commissioners, the Tribal Resolutions Committee, TERO officials and commissioners, and the Tribal General Counsel, totaling 68 in all. Most of these officials are members of the tribe, but some are not. Alliance officials are defined as the Alliance chairman and executive director as well as the primary executives of each of the governmental entities comprising the Alliance, which include school boards and school superintendents, highway district commissioners, county commissioners, county sheriffs, and city administrators, mayors, and councilpersons, totaling 105 in all. Nez Perce Tribal constituents are defined as all members of the Nez Perce Tribe who are not considered officials. In the survey, they are referred to as "Nez Perce Tribal Members." Their total population is approximately 2,500. Alliance constituents are defined as everyone who resides within the 1863 treaty boundaries of the Reservation and is not an Alliance official or a Tribal official or member. In the survey, they are referred to as "Non-Tribal Residents." Their total population is approximately 25,000.

Survey Administration

Data collection occurred in the summer of 2001. The survey questionnaire was hand-delivered to all 68 Tribal officials and all 105 Alliance officials by the administrative offices of the Tribe and the Alliance. A random sample of Tribal and Alliance constituents were also selected to receive the survey. Potential Tribal constituent participants were randomly selected from the Nez Perce Tribal Roll, and potential Alliance constituent participants were randomly selected from the telephone book. In the spring of 2001, officials from both the Tribe and the Alliance voted, separately, to participate in an educational process led by the authors, and thereby elected to participate in the survey.

In order to boost constituent response rates, several measures were taken. First, a staff assistant called each randomly selected constituent by telephone to explain the survey and ask for a verbal commitment to participate. Letters encouraging participation from the authors and letters from either the Tribal Chief or the Chairman of the Alliance as appropriate, were included in the survey mailing. Also included were a $10 bill and a blank raffle ticket. Anyone who filled out the raffle ticket and completed and returned the survey was entered in a raffle for $1,000. (The raffle has already been held and the prize distributed).

The survey was mailed to everyone who was randomly selected and who agreed to participate by telephone, or with whom direct contact was unable to be established. The survey was not mailed to anyone who refused to participate, or for whom our contact information appeared to be incorrect (e.g. wrong phone number, deceased, etc.). Table 1 shows a breakout of randomly selected constituents.

Respondents were informed that, other than being pre-categorized as Tribal/Alliance and official/constituent, their answers will remain confidential and will not be attributed to them on an individual basis.

Table 1: Randomly selected constituents

	Tribe	Alliance
Total selected	143[2]	174[3]
Telephone agreement, sent survey	71	79
No direct telephone contact, sent survey anyway	16	32
Telephone refusal, did not send survey	7	16
Incorrect contact information, unable to send survey	49	47
Total surveys sent	87	111

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[2] Two participants selected from the telephone book as potential Alliance constituents turned out to be Tribal members, and so are included in the Tribal constituent category. One participant selected from the Tribal Roll as a potential Tribal constituent turned out to be a Tribal official, and so is included in the Tribal official category only.
[3] One person selected from the telephone book as a potential Alliance constituent was found to live outside the Reservation boundaries, and therefore been excluded.

Survey Items

We will only describe here the questions that are relevant to this paper; the actual survey is considerably more extensive.[4] Four potential proposals are presented as "should" statements, two each at opposite extremes ranging from benefiting the Tribe and hurting the Alliance to benefiting the Alliance and hurting the Tribe. These proposals are listed in Table 2 below. Participants are asked to provide their opinion on a seven-point scale ranging from "completely disagree" to "completely agree."

Table 2: List of pro-Tribe and pro-Alliance proposals

Pro-Tribe Proposals
The Nez Perce Tribe should enforce the payment of Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance (TERO) fees (1.5% of total project cost) on all public or private construction on the reservation.   *All city and county governments should cease to exist within the boundaries of the Nez Perce reservation, and the Tribal government should serve as the only local government. Non-Tribal members living on the reservation should be considered resident aliens, and should be subject to all Tribal laws and jurisdiction.*
Pro-Alliance Proposals
The boundaries of the Nez Perce reservation should be re-defined to include only land owned by the Tribe or Tribal members; all land owned by non-Tribal members should be considered as off-reservation and exempt from any of the duties or privileges of reservation land.   *The Nez Perce Tribe should cease to exist as a government, and Nez Perce Tribal members should be treated as regular citizens of the State of Idaho with no special status or privileges.*

For each proposal mentioned, respondents are asked first for their own opinion and then to estimate the opinion of Tribal officials, Tribal constituents, Alliance officials, Alliance constituents, and an objective outsider. As in the Keltner and Robinson study on the Western Cannon dispute (1997), an attempt is made to encourage respondents to consider a numerical

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[4] Additional survey questions and results will be provided upon request.

16

average when assessing the opinion of groups, rather than the opinion of extreme or vocal group members. Thus, participants are asked "What is your estimate of the opinion of the group members, on average?"

However, unlike most previous studies (for example Robinson, *et al.* 1995), respondents are not asked all questions from one particular viewpoint before moving on to the next viewpoint. The method used in these other studies may provide an advantage in allowing the respondents to completely immerse themselves in one role at a time, perhaps making it easier for them to remember whose viewpoint they are considering and avoiding confusion. The disadvantage of this method in the present study is that participants are asked to consider not merely one or three viewpoints, but six viewpoints; to re-ask each question separately from each viewpoint would make the survey unbearably long.

Therefore, participants are asked to consider one proposal at a time, and then to evaluate it according to the six viewpoints. An example is provided in Table 3. Although it could be argued that it may be difficult for the participants to keep switching viewpoints, this may actually lead to more thoughtful and accurate responses, as respondents gain the ability to immediately and visually compare how they think different groups would respond to the same question. Furthermore, by considering all views at once, the participant will be more likely to calibrate the answer to each question according to the same criteria for each viewpoint.

However, another potential weakness of asking about all viewpoints at once is that, by seeing all the groups presented next to each other, participants may feel the need to differentiate their responses across groups. Thus, the present method may be creating the very effect under study. In the future, it would be advisable to test whether this actually occurs by running two

versions of a survey, one organized by question and the other by viewpoint, to compare whether there is any difference in the average answers.

Table 3: Example of a survey question asking respondents to assess a proposal from multiple viewpoints

II.1) *The Nez Perce tribe should enforce the payment of Tribal Employment Rights Ordinance (TERO) fees (1.5% of total project cost) on all public or private construction on the reservation.*

	Strongly Disagree			Neutral			Strongly Agree
What is your opinion?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
What is your estimate of the opinion of the group members, on average?							
Nez Perce Tribal Officials	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Nez Perce Tribal Members	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Alliance Officials	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Non-tribal Residents	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Neutral Outside Observers	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Results

The response rates for the various subject pools are as follows:[5] officials—60.3%; constituents—72.3%; Alliance officials—58.1%; Alliance constituents—70.9%. The response rates for the constituents are fairly high, at over 70% for both constituent groups. The response rates for the officials are close to 60% for both groups, so there may be some slight responder bias for the officials. Those officials who do not respond appear to be evenly spread out according to job category.

Partisan differences

As expected, there are actual partisan differences in opinion between the Tribe and the Alliance. The Tribe shows a stronger preference than the Alliance for the proposals favoring the

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[5] The response rates for officials measure the yield of usable returned surveys divided by the number of people who were deemed eligible to receive an official-version survey. The response rates for constituents measure the yield of usable returned surveys divided by the number of participants with whom contact was made within each subject pool. Contact includes both telephone and mail contact, i.e. everyone to whom a survey was mailed or who declined to participate when telephoned. Names of people randomly selected as potential participants for whom the contact information appeared to be inaccurate (e.g. wrong phone number, deceased, etc.) or who were not eligible to participate (e.g. do not live within Reservation boundaries) are not included in the response rate measurement.

Tribe and the Alliance shows a stronger preference than the Tribe for the proposals favoring the Alliance for each of the four proposals. Figure 1 shows the mean of the absolute value of the difference between Tribal officials and Alliance officials and between Tribal Constituents and Alliance Constituents across the four proposals. The average difference in opinion of Tribal and Alliance officials is 3.73 (n=34/56, t^6=16.07) and of Tribal and Alliance constituents is 3.76 (n=58/67, t=17.16), p<0.001 for both.

Role differences

Contrary to expectations, there are no systematic preference differences according to role. Also in Figure 1, we see that the means of the absolute value of the difference of Tribal official and constituent and of Alliance official and constituent responses are very small, at 0.27 (n=34/58, t=-1.43), and 0.24 (n=56/67, t=1.14), respectively. They are not significant, with p> 0.15 for both. Figure 1 demonstrates that partisan differences in opinion are much more important than role differences.

Figure 1: Degree of mean difference in actual opinions according to partisanship and role


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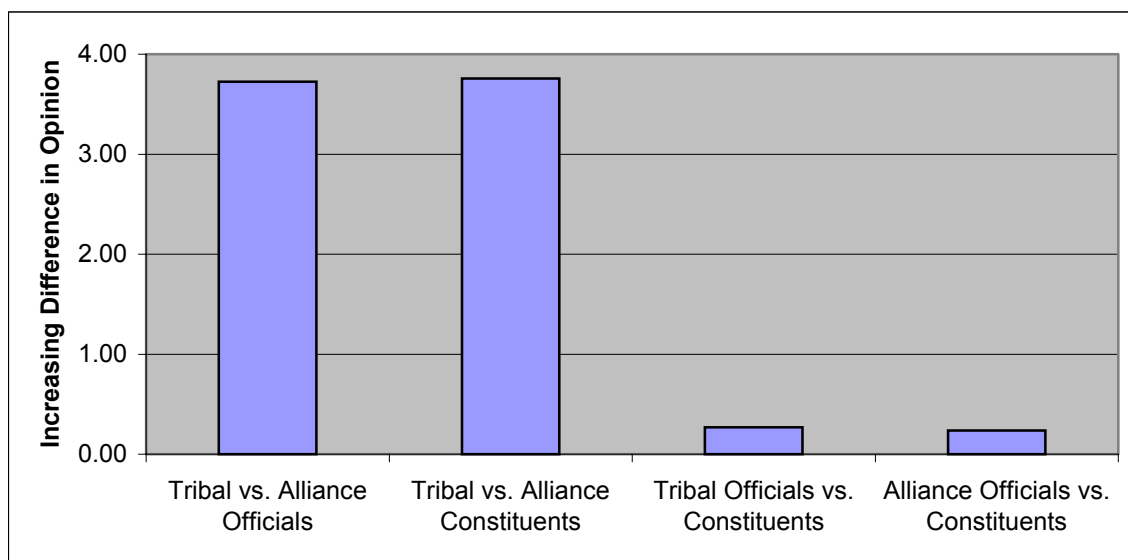
[6] we used two-tailed t-tests throughout; the findings would be even stronger with a one-tailed t-test.

Actual offensiveness versus defensiveness

As predicted, each group is more defensive than offensive. Figure 2 compares offensiveness and defensiveness in each subject category. An answer of 4 on the 1-7 scale is marked "neutral" on the questionnaire and is therefore considered neither offensive nor defensive. Offensiveness for the Tribe is measured by the taking the Tribal subject's answer minus 4 for proposals that favor the Tribe, and defensiveness for the Tribe is measured by taking 4 minus the Tribal subject's answer for proposals that favor the Alliance. The opposite is true for measuring the offensiveness and defensiveness of the Alliance. (Thus, the maximum offensive/defensive score is usually 3 and the minimum 0, whenever participants do not agree with proposals that favor the other side or disagree with proposals that favor their own side.) These measures are then averaged across the two pro-Tribe and the two pro-Alliance proposals, to arrive at a measurement of average offensiveness and defensiveness for each subject pool. Mean offensiveness/ defensiveness scores are 0.37/2.74 for Tribal officials (n=34, t=-7.47), 0.79/2.84 for Tribal constituents (n=58, t=-8.59), 1.48/2.87 for Alliance officials (n=56, t=-6.79), and 1.54/2.33 for Alliance constituents (n=67, t=-3.67). In each case, p<0.001, so the finding that partisans to a conflict are more defensive than offensive is highly significant.

Figure 2: Comparison of actual mean offensiveness and defensiveness

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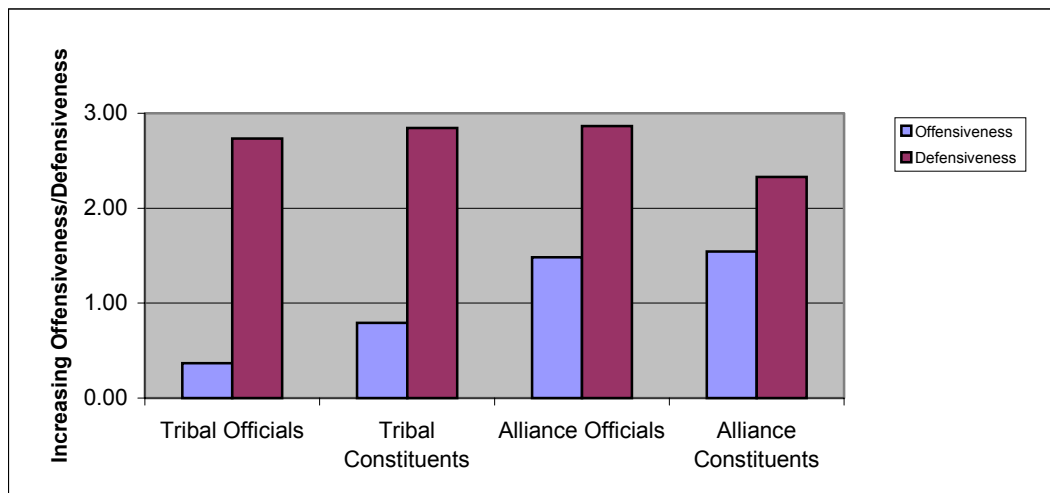
Perceptions of the other side's offensiveness

Each side s the other side's officials' offensiveness, but there is not a systematic pattern regarding estimates of the other side's constituents' offensiveness. On the whole, Tribal officials and constituents tend to underestimate Alliance constituents' offensiveness and Alliance officials and constituents tend to over-estimate Tribal constituents' offensiveness, as seen in Figure 3. Because there is no significant difference in perceptions of the other side according to the role of the perceiver, for simplicity we combine Tribal official and constituent perceptions and also Alliance official and constituent perceptions. The object of perception continues to be differentiated according to role.

Tribal officials' actual offensiveness is 0.27, but it is perceived by the Alliance to be much greater, at 1.82 (n=35/140, t=-5.73, p<0.001)[7]; Alliance officials' actual offensiveness is 1.48, but it is perceived by the Tribe as being 2.65 (n=56/105, t=-5.56, p<0.001). Tribal constituents' offensiveness of 0.79 is over-estimated by the Alliance to be 1.24 (n=58/140, t=-1.90, p=0.059), whereas Alliance constituents' offensiveness of 1.47 is underestimated by the Tribe to be 0.97 (n=72/106, t=1.96, p=0.052).

Figure 3 also demonstrates that each side perceives the offensiveness of the other side's officials to be much greater than that of the other side's constituents (p<0.001 for both Tribal estimates of the Alliance and for Alliance estimates of the Tribe).

Perceptions of the other side's defensiveness.

Contrary to expectations that partisans would over-estimate the extremity of their opponent's views both in terms of how offensive and how defensive they really are, we find that

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[7] Note that the means of actual offensiveness/defensiveness here (shown in comparison to estimates of offensiveness/defensiveness made by the other side) may vary slightly from the means shown when actual offensiveness is compared to actual defensiveness above. These differences occur because when offensiveness versus defensiveness is compared within a subject, all participants missing data in one area must be excluded. However, many of these same participants can be included in comparisons that do not require this missing data.

partisans consistently underestimate their opponents' defensiveness (See Figure 3). As with

perceptions of the other side's offensiveness, there is no significant role difference in terms of

the perceiver, so we combine perceptions by officials and constituents within the same side.

Tribal officials' actual defensiveness is 2.74, greater

than the Alliance estimate of 2.46 though not significantly (n=35/147, t=1.36, p=0.175).

Figure 3: Actual and perceived offensiveness
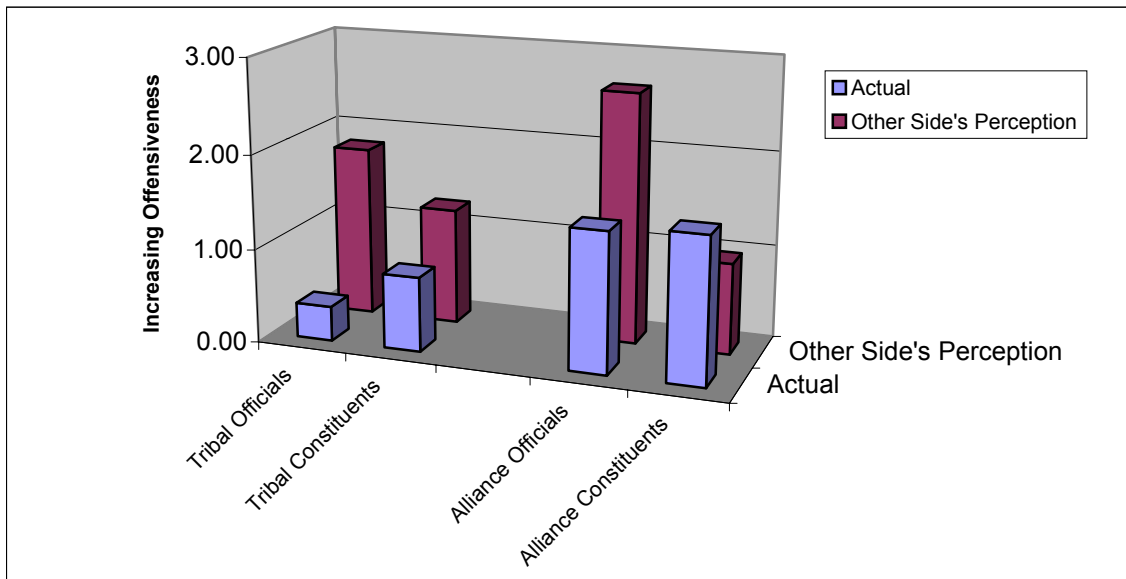
Figure 4: Actual and perceived defensiveness
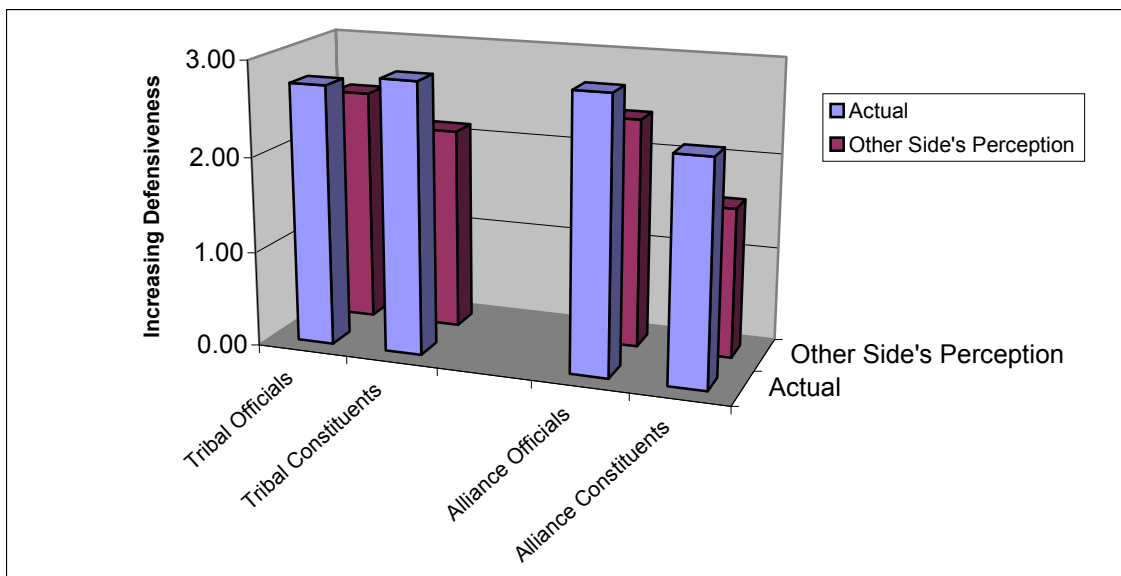
Alliance officials' defensiveness is 2.87, significantly greater than the Tribal estimate of 2.40 (n=57/107, t=2.65, p<0.01). Tribal constituents' defensiveness is 2.85, significantly greater than the Alliance estimate of 2.13 (n=59/146, t=4.24, p<0.001). Alliance constituents' defensiveness is 2.33, also significantly higher than the Tribal estimate of 1.57 (n=67/107, t=3.95, p<0.001).

As with offensiveness, partisans consistently judge the officials on the other side to be more extreme in terms of defensiveness than the constituents on the other side (p<0.001 for all).

Discussion

Main findings

The results presented in this paper can be divided into two main findings. First, in the context of a partisan conflict, the official versus constituent distinction is a useful one to make. This is true not so much in terms of the actual views of officials and constituents within the same side, which tend to be quite similar, but rather because of the difference in the way officials and constituents are perceived by the other side. Both officials and constituents seem to succumb to the "evil leader" assumption regarding the other side—namely they believe that the other side's officials are extremists both offensively and defensively compared to the other side's constituents—found by Bronfenbrenner (1986) and Burn and Oskamp (1989). Given that most people are naïve realists who believe that their own preferences and motivations are correct and good, they believe that anyone who disagrees with them is confused or bad or wrong; it is much easier to believe that a leader is wrong but is coercing a whole population to follow him/her than it is to believe that an entire population is mistaken or evil. Thus, it makes sense that partisans not only assume the other side's leaders are more extreme than constituents, but that they also over-estimate the true offensiveness of the other side's officials without significantly over-estimating the offensiveness of the other side's constituents.

Although the lack of a significant difference in actual opinions between officials and their constituents in the present study does not support the hypotheses driven by the research of King and Zeckhauser, Stoner, and Janis that might imply actual leader/constituent differences, this can be explained if the assumptions behind these lines of research are found not to apply. For example, the King and Zeckhauser finding that leaders are more extreme than their constituents is taken in a legislative context where one of the primary roles of the leaders is to negotiate with the other side (1999). Here, the primary function of many Tribal and Alliance Officials as defined in this survey is not to negotiate with the other side but rather to manage a school district or gaming commission or etc. involving some contact with the other side but also many other duties.

Given that many officials' job functions do not center around negotiating with the other side, they may not be more likely than the average constituent to engage in conversations about the conflict on a daily basis, and so the suggestions of official extremity from the Stoner and Janis research would not apply, either. It would be interesting to differentiate official responses between those officials primarily responsible for negotiations with the other side (e.g. NPTEC for the Tribe and the Chairman of the Alliance) and those whose primary job function is management, although this has not yet been done.

The other main finding is that partisans are very defensive (i.e. anxious to avoid giving up any of their rights, sovereignty, economic prosperity, etc.)—more so than they are offensive and more so than anyone on the other side would expect. In terms of actual offensiveness versus defensiveness, it seems that partisans are attached to the status quo in that they do not want to lose any of their current status or privileges (Samuelson & Zeckhauser, 1987). The present survey results show that, as predicted by Tversky and Kahneman's explanation of loss aversion

(1991), the desire to avoid losses (changes which benefit the other side at the expense of one's own side) does indeed loom larger in partisans' minds than the desire to achieve gains (changes which benefit one's own side at the expense of the other side). This is also consistent with the research by Allred and others mentioned above which portrays partisans to a conflict as more likely to emphasize their victimhood and the aggression of the other side than to appear to admit to being aggressive themselves (1998).

The consistent tendency for each side to underestimate the defensiveness of the other side is somewhat surprising given the amount of research showing that partisans tend to over-estimate the extremity of their opponents (e.g. Keltner & Robinson, 1996). However, as mentioned earlier, the present study differs from previous work in that the questions asked here are more directly relevant to the participants' own lives and are more explicitly action-oriented, i.e. suggestive of a direct change in policy—it therefore might be expected that respondents will actually be extreme on the defensive end for the reasons explained above. Under-estimation of an opponent's defensiveness carries two components: the fact that the opponent is defensive and the fact that that defensiveness is not perceived. The interesting question, then, is why do partisans **underestimate** the defensiveness of their opponents?

We can only sketch a partial answer here. we think that while partisans are aware of their own loss aversion, they fail to realize that their opponents are also averse to losses. Bazerman and Carroll point out that it is often the case that "negotiators fail to consider adequately the cognitions of opponent negotiators" (Bazerman & Carroll, p.259). In this case, part of this may stem from the fact that people do not see themselves as aggressive, and similarly may not recognize the full extent of harm to the other side of proposals that favor their own side. Thus, aside from attributions of "orneriness," they may not fully appreciate why anyone on the other

side would strongly object—or have cause to object—to such proposals. This ties into the Allred research (1999) on the accuser bias/bias of the accused if it is true that harm-doers not only have a tendency to underestimate the extent of their responsibility, but also the extent of harm suffered.

Implications for negotiations

Misperceptions of the views of an opponent's leaders are especially troublesome to negotiations because, generally, it is the leaders who are responsible for negotiating with the other side to attempt to settle a conflict. A suspicion that the other side's leaders are unduly offensive and do not even accurately represent their constituents' views may serve to heighten feelings that these leaders are morally unjust and that they are so unreasonable that any attempt to negotiate would be futile. Perhaps if partisans are reminded that the opposing party's leaders and constituents share many of the same concerns, they will take these concerns more seriously.

Failure to consider an opponent's true fears regarding potential losses also can hinder negotiations. For one thing, this underestimation of an opponent's defensiveness will make any negative reaction by the opponent to a proposal that favors one's own side at the opponent's expense seem unwarranted. It will also lead negotiators to fail to address their opponents' concerns and provide a safe environment in which to negotiate, and will decrease the likelihood of finding a mutually acceptable solution. Thus, interventions in troubled negotiations are needed to help negotiators both understand and appreciate each other's concerns.

Implications for future research

As discussed above, within the context of the current dataset it might be useful to examine the views of officials and distinguish among several categories of job descriptions to see if there are any patterns that emerge (i.e. perhaps a tendency for officials who primarily represent

one entity in negotiations with the other to be more extreme than officials who primarily manage various services). A more comprehensive picture would also be provided by including an analysis of perceptions of the opinions of other people within one's own side.

The present study is limited in that it examines only one conflict. Further research to substantiate the official/constituent distinction and the offensive/defensive distinction is recommended. It might be particularly interesting to continue this line of research with other Indian tribes in the United States, or with other cases where one semi-sovereign group resides within another sovereign-nation, to build up a substantial knowledge base about these types of cases.

Additionally, extensions of the Keltner and Robinson (e.g. 1996) research on actual and perceived motivations in a conflict setting, especially with regard to the leader/constituent and offensive/defensive distinctions, are recommended.

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