Stereotypes about Compassion Across the Political Spectrum

Julian A. Scheffer¹, C. Daryl Cameron^{1,2}, Stephanie McKee³, Eliana Hadjiandreou¹, & Aaron Scherer⁴

¹Department of Psychology, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA

²Rock Ethics Institute, The Pennsylvania State University, University Park, PA, USA

³Department of Psychology, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA, USA

⁴Department of Internal Medicine, University of Iowa, Iowa City, IA, USA

Address correspondence to the first author at jas1314@psu.edu

Author Note: This work was supported by grants from the National Science Foundation and the John Templeton Foundation awarded to C. Daryl Cameron, as well as with funding from the Rock Ethics Institute. C. Daryl Cameron also received small honoraria for talks involving this work at Augustana College and Wake Forest University.

Note: This article is accepted for publication at *Emotion*.

© 2020, American Psychological Association. This paper is not the copy of record and may not exactly replicate the final, authoritative version of the article. Please do not copy or cite without authors' permission. The final article will be available, upon publication, via its DOI:

10.1037/emo0000820

Abstract

To what extent are ideological differences in compassion real or exaggerated, and who is more likely to engage in stereotyping about such differences? In five studies, including three online studies and two field studies of voters at the Iowa Caucus and U.S. Presidential Election in 2016, we find evidence for political stereotyping about compassion. Although Democratic and Republican participants did not consistently rate themselves as feeling different amounts of compassion on a single-item self-assessment, there was a stereotype that the average Democrat/liberal is more compassionate than the average Republican/conservative. Importantly, this stereotype exaggerated the extent of self-reported differences in compassion across parties in these samples, and Democratic participants engaged in stronger stereotype exaggeration. These results suggest that although there can be ideological variability in compassion, the perceived difference may exaggerate this reality.

Keywords: compassion, politics, ideology, stereotyping, groups

Stereotypes about Compassion Across the Political Spectrum

In the wake of the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election, there has been an increasing discussion about the role of compassion in political decision-making. For example, debate around immigration policy seems to stem in part from Democrats characterizing Republicans as being “cold-hearted” for trying to hinder immigration from war-torn areas, and from Republicans characterizing Democrats as “bleeding-hearts” who allow their emotions to blind them into supporting the immigration of perceived outside threats. Although debate on these issues may be the result of actual ideological differences in the propensity to experience compassion— “the feeling that arises in witnessing another’s suffering and that motivates a subsequent desire to help” (Goetz, Keltner, & Simon-Thomas, 2010, p. 351)—it may also result from *misperceptions* about partisan and ideological differences in compassion. Specifically, if stereotypes about partisan and ideological variation in compassion *exaggerate* any actual group differences, then such misperceptions may stand in the way of resolving conflict if people misconstrue the motives and values of others (Olcaysoy Okten & Saribay, 2019; Ross & Ward, 1995).

A large volume of research has examined stereotyping and prejudice in the domains of race, gender, and sexual orientation (Bodenhausen & Richeson, 2010; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). Unlike these forms of stereotyping and prejudice, which are often condemned by large portions of the American public, there seems to be less aversion to expressing and acting on stereotypes about political affiliations (Inbar & Lammers, 2012; Iyengar & Westwood, 2015). Thus, for both theoretical and practical reasons, it is important to examine variation in political stereotyping. Partisan and ideological stereotyping have been examined previously, and some work found that members of each group overestimate the extent of their differences on political values (e.g., abortion rights; Chambers, Baron, & Inman, 2006; Chambers & Melnyk, 2006;

Robinson, Keltner, Ward, & Ross, 1995) and moral values (e.g., fairness and loyalty; Bruchmann, Koopmann-Holm, & Scherer, 2018; Graham, Nosek, & Haidt, 2012) compared to their political opponents.

While most of the previous research on political stereotypes has focused on perceived differences in political attitudes and moral values, the current studies focus on perceived differences in the emotion of compassion. Specifically, we examined whether there is a stereotype that Democrats/liberals are more compassionate than Republicans/conservatives¹. Any perceived differences in compassion are not entirely without merit, with some studies finding that liberals self-report having higher trait compassion than conservatives (with low to moderate-sized effects; Gault & Sabini, 2000; Hirsh, Deyoung, Xu, & Peterson, 2010; Iyer, Koleva, Graham, Ditto, & Haidt, 2012; McCue & Gopoiian, 2000; Osborne, Wootton, & Sibley, 2013; Pagano & Huo, 2007).

In addition to examining the presence and prevalence of stereotypes, it is important to understand to what degree those stereotypes exaggerate underlying differences that may exist. Prior work suggests that in some cases, liberals exaggerate the actual differences between liberals and conservatives, more so than do conservatives (Chambers et al., 2006; Chambers & Melnyk, 2006; Graham et al., 2009; Robinson et al., 1995; Scherer et al., 2015). For example, some studies have found that conservative ideology is linked with some forms of motivated social cognition (e.g., need for cognitive closure; Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003) and endorsement of certain moral foundations (e.g., loyalty; Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009).

¹ We recognize that political ideology is not fully equivalent to partisan group membership, such that not all liberals are Democrats and not all conservatives are Republicans. There has been increasing overlap between ideology and party affiliation in recent years (Chen & Goren, 2016; Clifford, 2017; Clifford, 2019), and for the sake of capturing variation in measurement across the current studies we use the terms “Democrat/liberal” and “Republican/conservative” for clarity.

However, when asked to rate the average Republican and average Democrat on these characteristics, participants have been shown in some studies to exaggerate these differences, and the stereotype exaggeration in these studies was engaged in more strongly by liberal participants (Graham et al., 2012; Scherer, Windschitl, & Graham, 2015). Therefore, we may expect to see ideological asymmetry in the application of political stereotypes about compassion.

Some relevant work has examined ideological stereotypes about prosocial responding. In one set of studies (Farwell & Weiner, 2000), liberal and conservative college students reported their willingness to provide financial support to different people in need (e.g., those suffering from unemployment, obesity, or having contracted AIDS) who were depicted as responsible or not responsible for their suffering. Additionally, they indicated how willing they thought liberal and conservative classmates would be to do the same. Liberal participants were more generous than conservative participants toward responsible targets, with no differences found for non-responsible targets. Additionally, participants expected that liberal classmates would be more generous than conservative classmates toward responsible targets. However, these perceptions exaggerated actual generosity toward responsible targets by liberal participants themselves, and conservative participants were more likely to engage in this stereotype exaggeration about liberals (termed the “Limbaugh effect”). Although there was a corresponding stereotype exaggeration such that conservatives’ generosity toward responsible targets was underestimated, it was not applied asymmetrically by liberal and conservative participants in the studies.

We extend prior research in stereotype exaggeration in important ways. First, our work is targeting compassion, not generosity. Although the two are related (for reviews, see Batson, 2011; Eisenberg, 2000; Goetz et al., 2010; Strauss et al., 2016), generosity is a behavioral outcome that can be caused by a variety of factors, including but not limited to compassion (see

Batson, 2011 for discussion). Additionally, Farwell and Weiner (2000) explored stereotype exaggeration about generosity as moderated by the responsibility of the victims for their plights. In contrast, we took an all-encompassing, generalized view of compassion by asking participants to report their views of others' compassionate nature without identifying responsibility for a suffering target. This approach may be more inclusive of all conditions for whether partisan and ideological stereotypes about compassion actually exist (e.g., devoid of all context, how compassionate do you think a Democrat or a Republican is?). Compared to Farwell and Weiner (2000) who used a comparably smaller sample of college-aged adults, our studies used large and diverse samples of participants from online populations (Studies 1a-1c), and from field studies conducted with voters in the 2016 Iowa Caucus (Study 2a) and in the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election (Study 2b). We modeled directly from prior work that found people exaggerated actual motivational differences between the average Democrat and average Republican (Scherer et al., 2015). We examined stereotypes of the group differences in compassion for the average Democrat/liberal and average Republican/conservative, and whether any perceived differences exaggerated any underlying differences across partisan groups in our samples, on a similarly structured self-assessed compassion item.

More recently, Clifford (2019) examined whether partisan group membership and political ideology were linked with personal valuation of compassion, as well as partisan stereotypes about compassion. In one study using a nationally representative sample, Democratic participants were more likely than Republican participants to place personal importance on being compassionate. Similarly, when focusing on ideology, liberal participants were more likely to place personal importance on being compassionate. Additionally, participants rated Democrats as being more compassionate than Republicans, and this stereotype about compassion was

exhibited by both Democratic and Republican participants. This work by Clifford (2019) extends beyond stereotypes of generosity, focusing on moral valuation of compassion and partisan stereotypes about trait compassion. The present studies build on this foundation by examining compassion stereotypes in a broad range of samples both online and during salient political events. Additionally, whereas Clifford (2019) assessed the importance that participants placed on compassion, the present studies measure participants' ratings of how compassionate they actually believe themselves to be, allowing for a test of whether stereotype exaggeration about compassion occurs, and if so, to what extent this exaggeration differs across partisan lines.

Across five studies, we examined stereotypes about group differences in compassion, whether these stereotypes exaggerated any actual group differences in compassion, and if these exaggerations were made asymmetrically by Democratic or Republican participants. Studies 1a-1c were conducted online via Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Study 2a was conducted with Iowa Caucus attendees on February 1, 2016. Study 2b was conducted with U.S. Presidential Election voters in Pennsylvania on November 8, 2016. In all studies, participants self-assessed how compassionate they were, and how compassionate they perceived the average Democrat/liberal and average Republican/conservative to be. We examined three key questions: (1) Do Democratic and Republican participants in these samples differ in self-reported compassion? (2) Do descriptive stereotypes about partisan and ideological differences in compassion exist? (3) Are these descriptive stereotypes exaggerations of *actual* group differences, and does party affiliation moderate stereotype exaggeration? To complement the focus on descriptive stereotypes, in four of the studies we examined another question: (4) Are there stereotypes about partisan and ideological differences in whether compassion is viewed as moral? In the final two studies with voters (2a and 2b), we examined a fifth question: (5) Is

identifying more with one's political in-group associated with increased compassion stereotype exaggeration in a party-favoring direction? Finally, to examine whether ideological extremity might account for any stereotyping, we conducted exploratory analyses with extremity (see the section "Does Ideological Extremity Explain Compassion Stereotyping?" after the main studies).

Studies 1a-1c: Examining Stereotypes in Online Samples

Method

Participants. Recruitment for all studies was approved by the Institutional Review Board. We recruited participants on MTurk during the spring of 2015 (Study 1a, $N = 306$, 135 females, 171 males, $M_{\text{age}} = 37.75$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.40$ years; Study 1b, $N = 420$, 232 females, 188 males, $M_{\text{age}} = 38.10$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 12.05$; Study 1c, $N = 200$, 108 females, 92 males, $M_{\text{age}} = 39.94$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 13.03$). Recent work suggests that MTurk samples can be useful and reliable for conducting political psychology research, with some work revealing comparable effect sizes between MTurk and nationally representative samples (Clifford, Jewell, & Waggoner, 2015). To qualify for completing the study participants had to be from the United States and 18 years or older with a HIT (Human Intelligence Task) approval rate of at least 95% and at least 1000 HITs approved. For all studies, we aimed to be able to detect a small correlation ($r = .20$) with 80% power and $\alpha = .05$ in a two-tailed test, which power analyses suggested would require a sample size of 193 participants. All of the MTurk samples had a liberal majority (Study 1a: 128 Democrats, 45 Republicans, 82 Independents, 23 other affiliations, and 28 declaring no affiliation, $M_{\text{Political}} = 3.32$, $SD_{\text{Political}} = 1.61$; Study 1b: 159 Democrats, 70 Republicans, 111 Independents, 37 other affiliations, and 43 declaring no affiliation, $M_{\text{Political}} = 3.43$, $SD_{\text{Political}} = 1.63$; Study 1c: 85 Democrats, 45 Republicans, 31 Independents, 16 other affiliations, and 23 participants indicating no affiliation, $M_{\text{Political}} = 3.64$, $SD_{\text{Political}} = 1.79$). For more details about the

samples, see Supplemental Online Material. For the focal stereotyping analyses, we restricted our sample to participants who identified as Democrats or Republicans.

Procedure and Materials.

Political ideology. Participants indicated economic and social political ideologies: “How would you describe your political outlook with regard to (economic/social) issues?” (from 1=*Extremely liberal* to 7=*Extremely conservative*). The social and economic items were highly correlated across studies ($r_s > .680$, $p_s < .001$), and averaged. Participants indicated party affiliation (1=*Democrat*, 2=*Republican*, 3=*Independent*, 4=*Liberal third party (e.g., Green Party)*, 5=*Conservative third party (e.g., Libertarian)*, 6=*No political affiliation*).

Compassion ratings. Participants completed a self-rating of compassion: “How compassionate do you consider yourself to be?” (from 1=*Not compassionate at all* to 7=*Extremely compassionate*). This single-item self-assessment of compassion showed a strong positive meta-analytic association with the more elaborate compassion trait measures, $r = 0.69$, 95% CI [0.57, 0.78], $Z = 8.31$, $p < .001$, suggesting convergent validity for the single-item self-assessment of compassion with other trait assessments (please see Supplemental Online Materials for details of the compassion trait measures). To examine stereotypes, we adapted a method from previous work to assess participants’ perceptions of the “average” or typical members of each party (see Graham et al., 2012; Scherer et al., 2015; see also Dawes, Singer, & Lemons, 1972). Participants completed ratings of political exemplars: “How compassionate do you consider the average Democrat to be?” and “How compassionate do you consider the average Republican to be?” (from 1=*Not compassionate at all* to 7=*Extremely compassionate*). In Studies 1b and 1c, the labels “liberal” and “conservative” were used instead of party labels; although liberal and conservative are not identical to Democrat and Republican, respectively, as

shown below we observed similar effects regardless of whether parties or ideologies were used as labels. In Study 1a, participants completed the self-rating prior to the political exemplar ratings, which were presented in randomized order; in Studies 1b and 1c, all three ratings were randomized. In addition to the descriptive ratings, participants also completed moral stereotype ratings. In Study 1a, participants were asked “To what extent do you think the average Democrat thinks that compassion is a good thing?” and “To what extent do you think the average Republican thinks that compassion is a good thing?” (from 1=*Not at all* to 7=*A lot*). In Study 1c, “liberal” and “conservative” replaced “Democrat” and “Republican”, respectively, and the moral stereotype ratings used the term “morally good thing” instead of “good thing”, to refine the measure to more clearly target perceptions of moral valuation.

Other compassion measures. For all other measures, see Supplemental Online Material. Study 1b contained a manipulation of lay theories of compassion prior to the items examined here, but will not be discussed further. Data and syntax for all studies are available at the Open Science Framework at: <https://osf.io/6pmdq/>.

Results

1. Do Democratic and Republican participants differ in compassion? Inconsistently.

As shown in Table 1 and Figure 1, Democratic participants self-reported more compassion than Republican participants in Study 1a, $F(1, 171) = 5.94, p = .016$, but not in Study 1b, $F(1, 227) = .00, p = .978$, or Study 1c: $F(1, 128) = .42, p = .519$. In the full samples, political conservatism correlated negatively with self-ratings of compassion in two of three studies (Study 1a: $r(304) = -.16, p = .004$; Study 1b: $r(418) = -.16, p = .001$; Study 1c: $r(198) = -.04, p = .541$).

Table 1.
Mean Self-Reported Compassion by Participant Party Affiliation

Study	Democratic Participants	Republican Participants	95% CI	Hedges' <i>g</i>
Study 1a	5.60 (0.97)	5.16 (1.28)	[0.09, 0.81]	0.42
Study 1b	5.45 (1.11)	5.46 (1.06)	[-0.31, 0.31]	-0.00
Study 1c	5.27 (1.36)	5.11 (1.30)	[-0.33, 0.65]	0.12
Study 2a	5.56 (0.91)	5.25 (1.01)	[0.00, 0.63]	0.33
Study 2b	5.85 (0.89)	5.67 (1.05)	[-0.13, 0.48]	0.18

Note. *SD* in parentheses. 95% CIs and effect sizes are for Dem-Rep mean difference.

Figure 1. Compassion ratings about the self, separately for Democratic and Republican raters. Error bars denote standard errors of the mean.

2. Do stereotypes regarding partisan differences in compassion exist? Yes.

Participants perceived the average Democrat as more compassionate than the average

Republican (Study 1a: $F(1, 171) = 54.24, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .24$; Study 1b: $F(1, 227) = 44.73, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .17$; Study 1c: $F(1, 128) = 24.60, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .16$), and this was moderated by

participant party affiliation (Study 1a: $F(1, 171) = 97.53, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .36$; Study 1b: $F(1, 227)$

$F(1, 227) = 44.73, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .28$; Study 1c: $F(1, 128) = 24.60, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .16$).

= 107.16, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .32$; Study 1c: $F(1, 128) = 31.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .20$). As seen in Table 2 and Figure 2, Democratic participants rated the average Democrat as more compassionate than the average Republican, whereas Republican participants did not. These effects replicated with the continuous political orientation measure in the full samples (see Supplemental Online Material).

Figure 2. Compassion ratings of average Democrat/liberal and average Republican/conservative, by Democratic and Republican participants. Error bars denote standard errors of the mean.

Table 2.

Compassion Stereotypes by Participant Party Affiliation

Study	Democratic Participants					Republican Participants				
	Avg. Dem.	Avg. Rep.	95% CI	p	g	Avg. Dem.	Avg. Rep.	95% CI	p	g
1a	5.39 (0.92)	2.80 (1.34)	[2.29, 2.89]	< .001	2.25	4.29 (1.44)	4.67 (1.19)	[-0.92, 0.16]	.163	-0.28
1b	5.42 (0.92)	3.29 (1.30)	[1.88, 2.38]	< .001	1.88	4.53 (1.56)	4.99 (1.26)	[-0.94, 0.03]	.065	-0.32
1c	5.18 (0.99)	3.31 (1.37)	[1.51, 2.24]	< .001	1.55	4.49 (1.58)	4.60 (1.39)	[-0.80, 0.58]	.747	-0.07
2a	5.36 (0.80)	3.01 (1.21)	[2.04, 2.66]	< .001	2.27	3.78 (1.63)	5.08 (1.06)	[-1.82, 0.79]	< .001	-0.94
2b	5.08 (0.97)	3.02 (1.21)	[1.75, 2.37]	< .001	1.87	4.20 (1.58)	4.59 (1.03)	[-0.80, 0.02]	.060	-0.29

Note. Values in Avg. Dem and Avg. Rep. columns represent mean compassion ratings for these targets, SD in parentheses. 95% CIs for mean difference across targets. g refers to Hedges' g .

3. Are these stereotypes exaggerations of actual group differences? Does party affiliation moderate the expression of stereotype exaggeration? Yes, and yes. Although there were not consistent differences in how Democratic and Republican participants rated themselves as compassionate, there were consistent stereotypes of the average Democrat/liberal as more compassionate than the average Republican/conservative. This discrepancy is interesting because it suggests that the stereotype may not fully track with any *actual* underlying differences.

Stereotype exaggeration was calculated by taking the difference in compassion self-ratings between Democratic and Republican participants in the sample from the perceived difference in compassion between Democrats and Republicans. Positive values indicate overestimating how compassionate the average Democrat is compared to the average Republican, whereas negative values indicate overestimating how compassionate the average Republican is compared to the average Democrat. As displayed in Table 3 and Figure 3, Democratic participants overestimated the extent to which Democrats were more compassionate than Republicans, (Study 1a: $t(127) = 14.14, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.85, 2.45], g = 1.24$; Study 1b: $t(158) = 16.89, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.88, 2.38], g = 1.33$; Study 1c: $t(84) = 9.30, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.35, 2.08], g = 1.00$), but Republican participants did not consistently exaggerate in the opposite direction (Study 1a: $t(44) = -3.09, p = .003, 95\% \text{ CI } [-1.36, -0.29], g = -.45$; Study 1b: $t(69) = -1.86, p = .068, 95\% \text{ CI } [-.94, .03], g = -.22$; Study 1c: $t(44) = -.79, p = .434, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.96, 0.42], g = -.12$). After recoding exaggeration to be in the same direction across parties (i.e., by multiplying the stereotype exaggeration value by -1 for Republican participants), Democratic participants were more likely than Republican participants to exaggerate the stereotype in a party-favoring direction (Study 1a: $F(1, 171) = 19.36, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .10$; Study 1b: $F(1, 227) = 45.19, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .17$; Study 1c: $F(1, 128) = 16.49, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .11$).

Table 3.
Stereotype Exaggeration by Participant Party Affiliation

Study	Democratic Participants				Republican Participants			
	Stereotype Ex. <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	95% CI	<i>p</i>	<i>g</i>	Stereotype Ex. <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	95% CI	<i>p</i>	<i>g</i>
Study 1a	2.15 (1.72)	[1.85, 2.45]	< .001	1.24	-0.82 (1.79)	[-1.36, -0.29]	.003	-0.45
Study 1b	2.13 (1.59)	[1.88, 2.38]	< .001	1.33	-0.45 (2.04)	[-0.94, 0.03]	.068	-0.22
Study 1c	1.71 (1.70)	[1.35, 2.08]	< .001	1.00	-0.27 (2.30)	[-0.96, 0.42]	.434	-0.12
Study 2a	2.03 (1.43)	[1.72, 2.34]	< .001	1.41	-1.62 (1.99)	[-2.13, -1.10]	< .001	-0.80
Study 2b	1.88 (1.57)	[1.57, 2.20]	< .001	1.19	-0.57 (1.63)	[-0.98, -0.16]	.007	-0.34

Note. *SD* in parentheses. Exaggeration is perceived differences in compassion (average Democrat – average Republican) minus actual difference in self-ratings of compassion between Democrat and Republican participants in the sample. Positive (negative) values indicate exaggerating the difference in Democrat (Republican) direction. 95% CIs for mean difference from zero. *g* refers to Hedges' *g*.

Figure 3. Stereotype exaggeration by Democratic and Republican raters. Positive values are exaggerating stereotype to be in Democrat-favoring direction, negative values are exaggerating stereotype in Republican-favoring direction. Error bars denote standard errors of the mean.

4. Are there moral stereotypes about compassion? Yes. Lastly, in Studies 1a and 1c we examined stereotypes about whether the average Democrat and Republican perceived compassion as a good thing (Study 1a) and whether the average liberal and conservative perceived compassion as a morally good thing (Study 1c). Although goodness and moral goodness may be not exactly the same, we intended both to reflect moralization of compassion and so discuss them together. In both studies, there was a main effect of target party (Study 1a: $F(1, 171) = 63.84, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .27$; Study 1c: $F(1, 128) = 25.01, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .16$) that was qualified by an interaction with participant political party (Study 1a: $F(1, 171) = 49.64, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .23$; Study 1c: $F(1, 128) = 21.37, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .14$). Democratic participants rated the average Democrat as more likely than the average Republican to view compassion as either a good thing or morally good thing (Study 1a: $M_{Dem} = 5.94, SE = .08, M_{Rep} = 3.46, SE = .15, p < .001, 95\% CI [2.14, 2.81]$; Study 1c: $M_{Lib} = 5.79, SE = .12, M_{Cons} = 4.09, SE = .16, p < .001, 95\% CI [1.32, 2.07]$), whereas Republican participants did not show this difference (Study 1a: $M_{Dem} = 5.24, SE = .25, M_{Rep} = 5.09, SE = .20, p = .585, 95\% CI [-0.41, 0.73]$; Study 1c: $M_{Lib} = 5.29, SE = .24, M_{Cons} = 5.22, SE = .22, p = .841, 95\% CI [-0.60, 0.73]$).

Discussion

In these three MTurk studies, we obtained a consistent pattern of results. First, Democratic and Republican participants did not consistently rate themselves as differing in their own levels of compassion. Second, there were ideological stereotypes of the average Democrat/liberal as more compassionate than the average Republican/conservative. Application of this stereotype was moderated by participant party affiliation: Democratic participants were more likely to stereotype the average Democrat/liberal as more compassionate than the average Republican/conservative, but Republican participants did not consistently show the reverse

pattern. Third, this stereotype exaggerated any actual differences in compassion between Democratic and Republican participants in the sample (as measured via the single-item self-assessment of compassion). Fourth, stereotype exaggeration was asymmetrical: Democratic participants were more likely to engage in stereotype exaggeration than Republican participants. Finally, participants exhibited moral stereotypes about compassion, rating the average Democrat/liberal as more likely to value compassion as a good thing (Study 1a) or morally good thing (Study 1c), and once again Democratic participants were more likely to exhibit this pattern.

Studies 2a and 2b: The Iowa Caucus and the U.S. Presidential Election of 2016

The foregoing results suggest that there is a stereotype about compassion varying across partisan lines, which exaggerates underlying partisan differences, and this stereotype exaggeration occurs more strongly for Democratic participants. One limitation of these initial studies is that they were all conducted online, on a crowd-sourcing platform that tends to have more liberal-oriented participants. It is possible that in more emotionally invested political situations, such as with voting, participants on both sides of the political spectrum might be more willing to express and exaggerate stereotypes. To address these concerns, we conducted a pair of field studies with voters in the Iowa Caucus in February 2016 and in the Pennsylvania U.S. Presidential Election in November 2016. In the Iowa Caucus, members of the Democratic and Republican parties each congregate separately in their local districts to argue and iteratively vote for their preferred Presidential nominee with fellow members of their parties. Given the investment associated with this process, it may be reasonable to speculate that people who voted in the 2016 Iowa Caucus and U.S. Presidential Election were more motivated to sustain political in-groups than our online MTurk participants. We expected to replicate the results from Studies 1a-1c with these politically active citizens. Additionally, we examined whether stereotype

exaggeration in a party-favoring direction would be related to participants' identification with their political in-group over their political out-group (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). To the degree that participants value their political in-groups, they should be more likely to exaggerate compassion stereotypes in a partisan manner.

Method

Participants. In Study 2a, we recruited 171 adult community members (94 females, 77 males, $M_{\text{age}} = 39.50$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 13.08$, 14 age unreported) during the Iowa Caucus on February 1, 2016. Participants for the Democratic Caucus were approached before and after, whereas participants for the Republican Caucus were approached after the Caucus.² In Study 2b, we recruited 195 community members (111 females, 84 males, $M_{\text{age}} = 46.84$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 16.78$, 4 age unreported) in Pennsylvania who were waiting to vote in the U.S. Presidential Election on November 8, 2016. Participants were compensated \$10 in Study 2a and \$5 in Study 2b. The field studies had more balanced proportions of Democrats and Republicans than the online studies (Study 2a: 87 Democrats, 63 Republicans, 11 Independents, 2 Libertarians, 1 Green Party member, and 7 undecided/unreported, $M_{\text{Political}} = 3.88$, $SD_{\text{Political}} = 1.83$; Study 2b: 102 Democrats, 64 Republicans, 18 Independents, and 11 undecided/unreported; $M_{\text{Political}} = 3.59$, $SD_{\text{Political}} = 1.48$). Participants who listed themselves as Independent and also Democratic or Republican (3 participants in Study 2a, 2 participants in Study 2b) were coded as “undecided”. As in Studies 1a-1c, the focal stereotyping analyses were restricted to the subset of participants who clearly identified as belonging to the Democratic party or Republican party.

Procedure and Materials.

In both studies, the beginning of the survey stated,

² There was one Republican participant in the sample who was surveyed prior to the Caucus.

“The Iowa Caucus [The U.S. Presidential Election] is a unique and influential political event in the United States. Given the increasing partisan political divides in this country, it is important for us to understand the attitudes and emotions of citizens who are politically active and engaged in their communities. Next, you will complete a short survey.”

Political ideology. Participants reported their gender, ethnicity, age, and political orientation (from 1=*Extremely liberal* to 7=*Extremely conservative*). In Study 2b, participants additionally reported their religiosity and annual family income. Participants reported their party affiliation, how many years they had been supporting their party, and which Presidential candidate they had voted/were voting for in the Caucus or Election, and whether they were completing the survey before or after voting.

Group identification measure. Participants answered the following questions separately for the Democratic and Republican Party (Van Bavel & Cunningham, 2012; from 1=*Strongly disagree* to 5=*Strongly agree*): “I feel a bond with other members of the Democrat/Republican party”, “I am committed to the Democrat/Republican party”, and “Supporting the Democrat/Republican party is an important part of my identity”. The group identification measure was not fully completed by 8 participants in Study 2a and 16 participants in Study 2b.

Compassion ratings. Participants completed the compassion ratings as in Study 1a, rating the self, average Democrat, and average Republican on how compassionate they were (from 1=*Not at all* to 7=*Extremely*), and the average Democrat and Republican on how much they considered compassion a morally good thing (from 1=*Not at all* to 7=*Extremely*). The forms in Study 2a had participant self-assess compassion after rating the average Democrat and Republican; the forms in Study 2b had participants self-assess compassion before rating the average Democrat and Republican. In Study 2a, 5 participants failed to complete the single-item self-assessment of compassion, 4 participants failed to provide complete descriptive ratings of

compassion for the average Democrat and Republican, and 5 participants failed to provide complete morality ratings of compassion for the average Democrat and Republican. In Study 2b, 4 participants failed to complete the single-item self-assessment of compassion, 5 participants failed to provide complete descriptive ratings of compassion for the average Democrat and Republican, and 4 participants failed to provide complete morality ratings of compassion for the average Democrat and Republican. For the sake of computing stereotype exaggeration, the actual difference in compassion between Democrats and Republican participants was derived from all participants who completed the self-assessment, even if they did not fully complete the descriptive ratings of the average Democrat and Republican. The stereotyping analyses were limited to only those participants who additionally completed the ratings of the average Democrat and Republican. For the full list of measures, see Supplemental Online Material.

Results

1. Do Democrats and Republicans differ in compassion? Inconsistently. As in the online studies, results were inconsistent. As depicted in Table 1, Democratic participants reported being more compassionate than Republican participants in Study 2a: $F(1, 144) = 3.99, p = .048$, though this difference was small and the 95% CI included zero so we suggest caution in interpreting this difference. There was no effect in Study 2b: $F(1, 162) = 1.35, p = .247$. Among the full sample, political conservatism correlated negatively with self-ratings of compassion in Study 2a: $r(164) = -.21, p = .006$, but not significantly in Study 2b, $r(189) = -.13, p = .065$.

2. Do stereotypes regarding partisan differences in compassion exist? Yes.

Replicating the online studies, participants perceived the average Democrat as more compassionate than the average Republican (Study 2a: $F(1, 144) = 13.72, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .09$; Study 2b: $F(1, 161) = 42.69, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .21$), and this was moderated by participant party

affiliation (Study 2a: $F(1, 144) = 166.02, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .54$; Study 2b: $F(1, 161) = 91.97, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .36$). As depicted in Table 2 and Figure 2, Democratic participants rated the average Democrat as more compassionate than the average Republican, but unlike in the online studies, Republican participants rated the average Democrat as less compassionate than the average Republican, although this effect was marginal in Study 2b. These effects replicated with the continuous political orientation measure in the full samples (see Supplemental Online Material).

3. Are these stereotypes exaggerations of actual group differences? Does party affiliation moderate the expression of stereotype exaggeration? Yes, and yes. Replicating the online studies, and as depicted in Table 3 and Figure 3, Democratic participants overestimated the extent to which Democrats were more compassionate than Republicans (Study 2a: $t(85) = 13.18, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.72, 2.34], g = 1.41$; Study 2b: $t(98) = 11.93, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [1.57, 2.20], g = 1.19$). Unlike the online studies, Republican participants exaggerated in the opposite direction (Study 2a: $t(59) = -6.29, p < .001, 95\% \text{ CI } [-2.13, -1.10], g = -.80$; Study 2b: $t(63) = -2.79, p = .007, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.98, -0.16], g = -.34$). After recoding exaggeration to be in the same direction across parties, Democratic (vs. Republican) participants were more likely to engage in stereotype exaggeration in Study 2b, $F(1, 161) = 26.42, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .14$, but not Study 2a, $F(1, 144) = 2.11, p = .149, \eta_p^2 = .01$.

4. Are there moral stereotypes about compassion? Yes. We examined whether participants displayed stereotypes about what the average Democrat and Republican perceived about the morality of compassion. In both studies, there was a main effect of target party (Study 2a: $F(1, 143) = 9.04, p = .003, \eta_p^2 = .06$; Study 2b: $F(1, 161) = 48.19, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .23$), that was qualified by an interaction with participant political party (Study 2a: $F(1, 143) = 105.82, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .43$; Study 2b: $F(1, 161) = 73.64, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .31$). Democratic participants rated

the average Democrat as more likely than the average Republican to view compassion as moral (Study 2a: $M_{Dem} = 5.60$, $SE = .10$, $M_{Rep} = 3.50$, $SE = .15$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [1.74, 2.47]; Study 2b: $M_{Dem} = 5.57$, $SE = .09$, $M_{Rep} = 3.50$, $SE = .13$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [1.73, 2.41]), whereas Republican participants showed the reverse pattern in Study 2a but no difference in Study 2b (Study 2a: $M_{Dem} = 4.27$, $SE = .24$, $M_{Rep} = 5.42$, $SE = .12$, $p < .001$, 95% CI [-1.70, -0.61]; Study 2b: $M_{Dem} = 4.70$, $SE = .19$, $M_{Rep} = 4.92$, $SE = .14$, $p = .269$, 95% CI [-0.61, 0.17]).

5. Does partisan group identification predict increased stereotype exaggeration?

Yes. We created an in-group identification difference score, by subtracting out-group identification from in-group identification. Participants identified more with their political in-group than their political out-group (Study 2a: $M_{diff} = 2.29$, $SD_{diff} = 1.37$, $t(141) = 19.88$, $p < .001$; Study 2b: $M_{diff} = 1.76$, $SD_{diff} = 1.62$, $t(153) = 13.49$, $p < .001$), and identification associated with increased stereotype exaggeration in a party-favoring direction (Study 2a: $r(138) = .31$, $p < .001$; Study 2b: $r(151) = .44$, $p < .001$). Thus, participants more bonded to their own party were more likely to exaggerate the average member of their own party as more compassionate.

Discussion

In field studies with voters in the 2016 Iowa Caucus and U.S. Presidential Election, we replicated effects from Studies 1a-1c. First, Democratic and Republican participants did not consistently rate themselves as differing in compassion. Second, participant party affiliation again moderated stereotypes about compassion, such that Democratic participants stereotyped the average Democrat as more compassionate than the average Republican, with Republican participants not consistently showing the reverse pattern. Replicating the online studies, the compassion stereotype exaggerated actual differences in self-identified compassion. Unlike the online studies, in the field studies Republican participants exhibited stereotype exaggeration

favoring Republicans, though the tendency to exaggerate was again weaker for Republican than Democratic participants. Finally, the field studies replicated the findings for moral stereotypes about compassion: Democratic participants judged that the average Democrat (vs. average Republican) was more likely to view compassion as morally good, but Republican participants did not consistently show this difference.

Does Ideological Extremity Explain Compassion Stereotyping?

One possible alternative explanation of these results is that more politically extreme participants show greater stereotyping, and that this explains the variations in stereotype exaggeration effect across our studies. Prior work found that politically extreme people feel confident in their attitudes (Toner, Leary, Asher, & Jongman-Sereno, 2013) and simplify their thinking on political issues (Lammers, Koch, Conway, & Brandt, 2017; Van Prooijen, Krouwel, & Emmer, 2018) and groups (van Prooijen, Krouwel, Boiten, & Eendebak, 2015; Westfall, Van Boven, Chambers, & Judd, 2015) in a manner that polarizes their own viewpoint and perceptions of others' views. Such individuals may be more prone to engage in stereotype exaggeration.

To examine this alternative explanation, in exploratory analyses we created an ideological extremity score by folding the political orientation measure (Brandt, Evans, & Crawford, 2015). In Studies 1a-1c, this was a composite of two political orientation items meant to capture views on economic and social factors, and so included non-whole numbers (e.g., 1.5). Participants who scored as either as a 1 or 7 were coded as a 3 (i.e., most extreme, the highest value), 1.5 or 6.5 coded as 2.5, 2 or 6 coded as 2, 2.5 or 5.5 coded as 1.5, 3 or 5 coded as 1, 3.5 or 4.5 coded as 0.5, and 4 coded as 0 (i.e., least extreme, the lowest value). In Studies 2a-2b, we created an ideological extremity score by folding the single-item political orientation measure such that participants who scored as a 1 or 7 were coded as a 3 (i.e., most extreme, the highest value), 2 or

6 coded as 2, 3 or 5 coded as 1, and 4 coded as 0 (i.e., least extreme, the lowest value). We conducted two separate analyses: first, we treated the continuous extremity score as a covariate in all analyses, and second, we examined whether the continuous extremity measure interacted with key predictors for all analyses. In the main text, we summarize the basic findings for these two extremity analyses, with full inferential and descriptive statistics reported in the Supplemental Online Materials.

In terms of stereotypes, when including extremity as a covariate there were still participant party x target party interactions for ratings of others' compassion in all studies ($ps < .001$). When including the interaction with extremity, there were three-way interactions in Studies 1a, 1b, 2a, 2b ($ps \leq .031$), and marginally in Study 1c. The two-way interactions – in which Democratic participants were more likely than Republican participants to stereotype the average Democrat/liberal (vs. average Republican/conservative) as more compassionate – were more pronounced among participants higher in extremity, and were reduced but still present in participants lower in extremity. In Studies 1a, 1b, 2a, and 2b, but not Study 1c, at high extremity the pattern reversed for Republican participants, such that they rated the average Republican/conservative as more compassionate than the average Democrat/liberal. Moreover, in all studies, extremity also moderated the participant party by target party interactions for moral stereotypes, with these patterns mirroring those for the descriptive stereotypes for compassion: the two-way interactions for participant party by target party were stronger among participants higher in extremity (for details, see Supplementary Online Materials).

In terms of stereotype exaggeration, when controlling for extremity, Democratic participants were still more likely than Republican participants to engage in stereotype exaggeration in a party-favoring direction in those studies where a difference had emerged (i.e.,

all but Study 2a; $ps < .001$). Additionally, extremity did not moderate the impact of participant political party on stereotype exaggeration in any study ($ps > .180$), though extremity did correlate positively with stereotype exaggeration in a party-favoring direction (with r 's ranging from .14-.34). These results suggest that although ideological extremity associated with increased compassionate stereotypes, it did not fully account for the pattern across partisan lines.

This work builds upon prior work on whether political stereotypes are applied symmetrically or asymmetrically across political groups. For instance, Brandt and Crawford (2019) make the case that with more heterogeneous sampling and with a more diverse array of targets (Koch et al., 2016), prejudice actually exists on both sides of the political spectrum symmetrically (Brandt et al., 2014). Additionally, Stern and Crawford (2020) found that liberals and conservatives both stereotype opposing group members as ideologically dissimilar to themselves, which associates with negative emotions towards those group's members (though there were differences in which kinds of dissimilarity mattered for liberal and conservative participants). On the other hand, there is other work that reveals asymmetric application of ideological stereotypes (e.g., Farwell & Weiner, 2000; Graham et al., 2012; Scherer et al., 2015).

The present work suggests overall, the application of compassion stereotypes is asymmetric by participant party, but there are some differences that emerge at higher levels of ideological extremity. At low extremity, Democratic participants showed the descriptive stereotype about ideological differences in compassion, and Republican participants did not; but at higher levels of extremity, Democratic participants increased the stereotype and Republican participants began showing the opposite stereotype (i.e., Republican targets as more compassionate). Relatedly, there was the positive correlation between extremity and stereotype exaggeration in a party-favoring direction, although importantly, extremity did not moderate the

participant party effect on exaggeration. These results suggest that perhaps stereotypes become more symmetrically applied (though still not fully symmetrical in these studies) at higher levels of extremity. It could be that politically extreme individuals perceive the opposition as more of a threat (Crawford, 2014; Crawford & Pilanski, 2014), simplify the political domain in a way that increases their separation from outgroups (Lammers et al., 2017; Westfall et al., 2015), or are more likely than moderates to project their own political polarization onto the opposition (Van Boven, Judd, & Sherman, 2012). More work is needed to understand when and why political stereotypes are symmetrically or asymmetrically applied.

Internal Meta-Analyses

Compassion Stereotyping

We conducted internal meta-analyses across the five studies to examine if Democrats and Republicans exhibited differences in self-reported compassion, in the tendency to stereotype Democrats and Republicans, and in stereotype exaggeration. Given the differences in methods across samples we conducted these as random-effects meta-analyses (Borenstein, Hedges, Higgins, & Rothstein, 2009). Across studies, Democratic participants self-reported as being modestly higher in compassion than Republican participants, with standardized mean difference (in Hedges' g) of 0.20, 95% CI [0.05, 0.35], $Z = 2.54$, $p = .011$.

Democratic participants stereotyped the average Democrat/liberal as more compassionate than the average Republican/conservative, with a standardized mean difference (in Hedges' g) of 1.94, 95% CI [1.69, 2.19], $Z = 15.12$, $p < .001$, whereas Republican participants stereotyped the average Democrat/liberal as *less* compassionate than the average Republican/conservative, Hedges' $g = -0.37$, 95% CI [-0.62, -0.12], $Z = -2.90$, $p = .004$. Democratic participants showed evidence of stereotype exaggeration, Hedges' $g = 1.24$, 95% CI [1.11, 1.36], $Z = 18.76$, $p < .001$,

whereas Republican participants showed stereotype exaggeration in the opposite direction, Hedges' $g = -0.38$, 95% CI $[-0.60, -0.16]$, $Z = -3.36$, $p = .001$. For moral stereotypes, Democratic participants stereotyped the average Democrat as more likely to value compassion than the average Republican, Hedges' $g = 1.64$, 95% CI $[1.36, 1.93]$, $Z = 11.21$, $p < .001$, but the opposing pattern was not significant for Republican participants, Hedges' $g = -0.20$, 95% CI $[-0.56, 0.17]$, $Z = -1.06$, $p = .290$. Furthermore, there was a strong meta-analytic association between descriptive and moral stereotypes, $r = 0.81$, 95% CI $[0.73, 0.86]$, $Z = 12.42$, $p < .001$.

In summary, Democratic participants rated themselves as more compassionate than Republican participants; Democratic and Republican participants exhibited opposing stereotypes about whether the average Democrat/liberal or Republican/conservative was more compassionate, and more likely to morally value compassion (though meta-analytically, Republican participants did not show a significant moral stereotyping effect). Lastly, participants from both parties exhibited party-favoring stereotype exaggeration for the descriptive compassion ratings, with the effect more pronounced among Democratic participants.

Experienced Compassion

In addition to examining stereotypes about compassion, we also examined the relationship between political orientation and other measures of compassion across the five studies while re-including all participants that completed the relevant measures (i.e., the full samples beyond those participants who identified as Democrats and Republicans; for details about exclusions, see Supplemental Online Materials). Here, we focused on measures that were common across the five studies, which included trait compassion, state compassion, and motivation to avoid compassion. For all studies, political orientation was measured continuously with higher values indicating more conservatism and lower values indicating more liberalism.

When studies included multiple measures of trait compassion or state compassion, they were combined into composites as sums of *z*-scores. For trait compassion, all studies included at least the Interpersonal Reactivity Index Empathic Concern subscale (Davis, 1983) and in some cases included additional measures—the Big Five Aspects Scale’s Compassion subscale (DeYoung, Quilty, & Peterson, 2007) was included in Study 1a and three items assessing compassion approach tendencies (similar to the approach by Harmon-Jones et al., 2011) were included in Studies 1a and 1b (for details, see Supplemental Online Materials). These trait-level analyses did not include the single item self-assessment of compassion that participants responded to across studies. For state compassion, there were a range of targets across studies including Sudanese refugees, stigmatized homeless individuals, multiple measures of compassion for Syrian refugees, and hypothetical Democratic and Republican targets undergoing misfortunes (for details, see Supplemental Online Materials). Motivation to avoid compassion was assessed across all studies with the Fear of Compassion for Others Scale, which had participants report the degree to which they believe that compassion is materially, emotionally, and morally costly (Gilbert, McEwan, Matos, & Ravis, 2011).

Meta-analytically, conservative political ideology was associated with reduced trait compassion, $r = -0.16$, 95% CI $[-0.21, -0.11]$, $Z = -5.73$, $p < .001$, reduced state compassion, $r = -0.24$, 95% CI $[-0.30, -0.19]$, $Z = -8.70$, $p < .001$, and increased motivation to avoid compassion, $r = 0.34$, 95% CI $[0.29, 0.39]$, $Z = 11.92$, $p < .001$. These results suggest that when accounting for variation across the political spectrum (and not just focusing on party-related effects), there were small relationships of ideology with multiple measures of compassion. The motivation finding is consistent with prior work on ideological differences in motivation to empathize (Hasson, Tamir, Brahms, Cohrs, & Halperin, 2018), suggesting that ideological factors may be relevant for the

perceived costs and benefits of feeling compassion. Moreover, in exploratory analyses among the participants who identified as Democrats and Republicans (i.e., the subset used for the stereotype exaggeration analyses), there was a meta-analytic negative association between motivation to avoid compassion and compassion stereotype exaggeration in a party-favoring direction, $r = -0.19$, 95% CI [-0.26, -0.12], $Z = -5.44$, $p < .001$. This result suggests that motivation to feel or avoid compassion may play a role in application of stereotypes about compassion, and future work could examine this question from a motivated empathy framework (e.g., Cameron, 2018; Zaki, 2014).

General Discussion

The current research examined the prevalence of ideological stereotypes about compassion, whether they exaggerate any underlying ideological differences, and whether such exaggeration occurs asymmetrically across partisan lines. Consistent with research on political stereotypes in other domains (e.g., Graham et al., 2012; Scherer et al., 2015), the current studies reveal that people exaggerate the extent of ideological differences in compassion. In both online studies of adults and field studies of voters at the 2016 Iowa Caucus and the 2016 U.S. Presidential Election, participants perceived the average Democrat/liberal as more compassionate than the average Republican/conservative, and this perceived difference exaggerated actual differences in compassion reported by Democratic and Republican participants in our samples.

Importantly, the stereotype about descriptive differences in compassion was moderated by participant party affiliation. Whereas Democratic participants exhibited a stereotype of Democrats/liberals as more compassionate than Republicans/conservatives, Republican participants showed a different pattern: in the online studies, Republican participants did not rate

these targets differently, and in the field studies, Republican voters rated Democrats/liberals as lower in compassion than Republicans/conservatives.

Similarly, stereotype exaggeration differed by political party, and again depended on the study context. In the online studies, Democratic participants engaged in strong stereotype exaggeration, whereas Republican participants did not consistently engage in stereotype exaggeration. When recoding stereotype exaggeration to be in a party-favoring direction, these studies provided evidence that Democratic participants asymmetrically engaged in party-favoring stereotype exaggeration compared to Republican participants. By contrast, in the field studies of voters at the Iowa Caucus and U.S. Presidential Election in 2016, Democratic participants and Republican participants engaged in stereotype exaggeration in *opposing* directions: Republican participants rated the average Republican as more compassionate than the average Democrat, to an extent that exaggerated actual differences between Republicans and Democrats in these samples. Overall, the meta-analysis suggested that across contexts, partisan stereotype exaggeration was engaged in more strongly by Democratic participants, consistent with some prior work on asymmetric application of political stereotypes (Scherer et al., 2015). However, the variability in this asymmetry effect suggests that any inferences about strength of partisan differences in stereotyping should take context into account.

These results suggest that although there are robust stereotyping and stereotype exaggeration effects, the partisan nature of these effects differed across the online and field studies. In the field studies, more so than in the online studies, participants in both parties had a tendency to stereotype and engage in stereotype exaggeration in a party-favoring direction. These reversals may reflect the fact that the field studies contained samples of politically engaged citizens, who may have greater motivation to support the in-group over the out-group

(Balliet, Wu, & De Dreu, 2014; Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014) in these competitive political contexts. Compassion might be seen as a positive and virtuous emotion ascribed preferentially to the political in-group for members of both political parties. Supporting the inference that intergroup motivations matter for compassion stereotyping, participants in Studies 2a and 2b who were more likely to identify with their political in-group (vs. out-group) showed greater exaggeration of the compassion stereotype in a party-favoring direction. In other words, people who placed a higher value on their political party were more likely to believe the average member of their own (vs. the opposing) party was compassionate, in a manner that exaggerated the actual differences. This finding suggests that future work might seek to address this compassion stereotype by changing how people value their political in-groups and out-groups.

Another possible explanation for contextual variation in the stereotyping effects may be that compassion stereotypes were more accessible within the US Presidential campaign and election environments of 2016. Prior work reveals that accessible stereotypes are more likely to be used in service of stereotype exaggeration (for an example related to accessibility of gender stereotypes, see Eyal & Epley, 2017). However, we note that establishing the degree of compassion stereotype accessibility is an open question, as stereotype accessibility and norms of expressing them may not have been the same between the 2015 online studies and the 2016 field studies. Potentially heightened intergroup conflict among active voters in the context of the 2016 U.S. Presidential election may be an important factor for compassion stereotyping, and future research should continue to address this question systematically.

Strengths of the current studies include the use of a variety of samples (online, Iowa Caucus, U.S. Presidential election) and the novel demonstrations of opposing political stereotypes and the role that partisan group identity plays in political stereotype exaggeration.

Limitations of our findings include the use of convenience samples and single-item ratings of compassion for the self and political party exemplars. Notably, however, we generalized our results from online studies to field studies of active voters, across multiple events (Iowa Caucus, U.S. Presidential election) and locations (Iowa, Pennsylvania), which should mitigate against some of these concerns. With that being said, the field studies were collected leading up to the 2016 Presidential Election, and may not fully generalize to current experiences, judgments, and motivations in regard to compassion. Continued work should study compassion stereotypes in other political contexts and could additionally build upon this work using nationally representative samples of citizens.

The meta-analytic result that Democrats reported higher levels of compassion than Republicans is consistent with some other work demonstrating political differences in compassion (Hasson et al., 2018; Hirsh et al., 2010; Iyer et al., 2012; McCue & Gopalan, 2000; Osborne et al., 2013; Pagano & Huo, 2007). It remains possible that the single-item self-assessment of compassion may capture participants' self-concepts or self-theories, rather than whether they actually experience compassion in everyday situations. Because the single-item self-assessment did not specify a target, as a measure it is insensitive to possible variation in compassion depending on target type (e.g., in-group vs. out-group; see Bruneau, Cikara, & Saxe, 2017; Waytz, Iyer, Young, Haidt, & Graham, 2019). We opted for the single-item approach in the current work to readily match self-assessment of compassion against assessment of the average Democrat/liberal and Republican/conservative. As noted in the Method for Studies 1a-1c, the single-item self-assessment associated with the longer self-report measures of trait compassion administered in these studies, providing evidence for construct validity.

In additional analyses, when examining the relationship between political ideology and compassion across studies, there were small-to-moderate meta-analytic negative associations between conservative ideology and trait and state compassion, and a positive association between conservative ideology and motivation to avoid compassion. This last finding is consistent with some prior work documenting ideological variation in motivation to empathize (Hasson et al., 2018), and additional analyses revealed that across studies, motivation to avoid compassion was associated with reduced stereotype exaggeration about compassion in a party-favoring direction. In other words, to the degree that participants desired to avoid compassion, they were less likely to selectively consider their political in-group as compassionate. These results suggest the need for continued research on the existence and causes of political stereotypes, as doing so might inform interventions to improve intergroup dialogue and cooperation (e.g., to reduce the tendency to seek out and favor those with similar political views; for more on the connection between stereotyping and homophily, see Bruchmann et al., 2018). Importantly, these results may not generalize to all compassion measures or targets, or to all samples of participants, and so these correlational results should be taken as an initial set of findings. Future work is needed in order to understand whether and when there are ideological differences in compassionate responding.

Critically, in the current work we are not making any normative or ethical claims about whether exhibiting compassion, or being motivated to avoid it, is inherently positive or negative. Rather, experiences of compassion, and corresponding motivations and judgments, will likely be seen as valuable or not to decision-makers depending on their goals. Perceiving that compassion is costly might be beneficial to a decision-maker in some conditions, and it might be detrimental to a decision-maker in other conditions (for review of motivated empathic decisions, see Zaki,

2014). Moreover, recent work suggests that in some cases trait compassion may associate positively with political polarization outcomes (Simas, Clifford, & Kirkland, 2019), suggesting that the relationship between compassion, stereotypes, and political outcomes may be complicated. More work is needed to better understand the relationship between people's felt values and their decisions to feel compassion, but ethical and political recommendations go beyond the scope of the present work, which focuses only on understanding how people feel and make judgments about compassion in themselves and others.

Conclusion

Understanding the factors that shape political stereotypes is critical for developing interventions to address them and enable cooperation within and across groups. While there is evidence for some ideological differences in compassion, our work shows that these differences can be exaggerated, particularly when there is strong in-group identification. Such exaggeration runs the risk of creating further divides and perceived distance between parties, and of decreasing the chances of working towards commonly valued outcomes. To reduce conflict between political groups, people might consider the role of perceptions, and misperceptions, about the moral emotions of others.

References

- Balliet, D., Wu, J., & De Dreu, C. K. (2014). Ingroup favoritism in cooperation: a meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 140(6), 1556-1581. doi:10.1037/a0037737
- Batson, C. D. (2011). *Altruism in Humans*. Oxford University Press, USA.
- Bodenhausen, G. V., & Richeson, J. A. (2010). Prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination. In R. F. Baumeister, & E. J. Finkel (Eds.), *Advanced Social Psychology: The State of the Science* (1st ed., pp. 341-383). New York: Oxford University Press.
- Borenstein, M., Hedges, L. V., Higgins, J. P., & Rothstein, H. R. (2011). *Introduction to Meta-Analysis*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Brandt, M. J., & Crawford, J. T. (2019). Studying a heterogeneous array of target groups can help us understand prejudice. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 28(3), 292-298. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721419830382>
- Brandt, M. J., Evans, A. M., & Crawford, J. T. (2015). The unthinking or confident extremist? Political extremists are more likely than moderates to reject experimenter-generated anchors. *Psychological Science*, 26(2), 189-202. doi:10.1177/0956797614559730
- Brandt, M. J., Reyna, C., Chambers, J. R., Crawford, J. T., & Wetherell, G. (2014). The ideological-conflict hypothesis: Intolerance among both liberals and conservatives. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 23(1), 27-34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0963721413510932>
- Bruchmann, K., Koopmann-Holm, B., & Scherer, A. (2018). Seeing beyond political affiliations: The mediating role of perceived moral foundations on the partisan similarity-liking effect. *PloS one*, 13(8), e0202101. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0202101>

- Bruneau, E. G., Cikara, M., & Saxe, R. (2017). Parochial empathy predicts reduced altruism and the endorsement of passive harm. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 8(8), 934-942. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550617693064>
- Cameron, C. D. (2018). Motivating empathy: Three methodological recommendations for mapping empathy. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 12, e12418. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12418>
- Chambers, J. R., Baron, R. S., & Inman, M. L. (2006). Misperceptions in intergroup conflict: disagreeing about what we disagree about. *Psychological Science*, 17, 38-45. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9280.2005.01662.x
- Chambers, J. R., & Melnyk, D. (2006). Why do I hate thee? Conflict misperceptions and intergroup mistrust. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32, 1295-1311. doi:10.1177/0146167206289979
- Chen, P. G., & Goren, P. N. (2016). Operational ideology and party identification: A dynamic model of individual-level change in partisan and ideological predispositions. *Political Research Quarterly*, 69(4), 703-715. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1065912916658551>
- Clifford, S. (2019). Compassionate Democrats and tough Republicans: How ideology shapes partisan stereotypes. *Political Behavior*, Published online March 6. doi:10.1007/s11109-019-09542-z
- Clifford, S. (2017). Individual differences in group loyalty predict partisan strength. *Political Behavior*, 39(3), 531-552. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11109-016-9367-3>
- Clifford, S., Jewell, R. M., & Waggoner, P. (2015). Are samples drawn from Mechanical Turk valid for research on political ideology? *Research and Politics*, 2, 1-9. doi: 10.1177/2053168015622072

- Crawford, J. T. (2014). Ideological symmetries and asymmetries in political intolerance and prejudice toward political activist groups. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 55*, 284-298. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2014.08.002>
- Crawford, J. T., & Pilanski, J. M. (2014). Political intolerance, right and left. *Political Psychology, 35*(6), 841-851. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9221.2012.00926.x>
- Davis, M. H. (1983). Measuring individual differences in empathy: Evidence for a multidimensional approach. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 44*(1), 113-126. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.44.1.113>
- Dawes, R. M., Singer, D., & Lemons, F. (1972). An experimental analysis of the contrast effect and its implications for intergroup communication and the indirect assessment of attitude. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 21*, 281-295.
[doi:10.1037/h0032322](https://doi.org/10.1037/h0032322)
- DeYoung, C. G., Quilty, L. C., & Peterson, J. B. (2007). Between facets and domains: 10 aspects of the Big Five. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 93*(5), 880-896.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.93.5.880>
- Eisenberg, N. (2000). Emotion, regulation, and moral development. *Annual Review of Psychology, 51*(1), 665-697. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.51.1.665>
- Eyal, T. & Epley, N. (2017). When gender stereotypes overestimate actual group differences. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 43*, 1323-1336.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0146167217713190>
- Farwell, L., & Weiner, B. (2000). Bleeding hearts and the heartless: Popular perceptions of liberal and conservative ideologies. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 26*(7), 845-852. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167200269009>

- Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P., & Xu, J. (2002). A model of (often mixed) stereotype content: Competence and warmth respectively follow from perceived status and competition. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6), 878-902.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.82.6.878>
- Gault, B. A., & Sabini, J. (2000). The roles of empathy, anger, and gender in predicting attitudes toward punitive, reparative, and preventative public policies. *Cognition & Emotion*, 14, 495-520. doi:10.1080/026999300402772
- Gilbert, P., McEwan, K., Matos, M., & Rivis, A. (2011). Fears of compassion: Development of three self-report measures. *Psychology and Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*, 84(3), 239-255. doi:10.1348/147608310X526511
- Goetz, J. L., Keltner, D., & Simon-Thomas, E. (2010). Compassion: An evolutionary analysis and empirical review. *Psychological Bulletin*, 136, 351-374. doi:10.1037/a0018807
- Graham, J., Haidt, J., & Nosek, B. A. (2009). Liberals and conservatives rely on different sets of moral foundations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96, 1029-1046.
doi:10.1037/a0015141
- Graham, J., Nosek, B. A., & Haidt, J. (2012). The moral stereotypes of liberals and conservatives: Exaggeration of differences across the political spectrum. *PloS One*, 7(12), e50092. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0050092>
- Greenwald, A. G., & Pettigrew, T. F. (2014). With malice toward none and charity for some: Ingroup favoritism enables discrimination. *American Psychologist*, 69(7), 669-684.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0036056>
- Harmon-Jones, E., Harmon-Jones, C., Amodio, D. M., & Gable, P. A. (2011). Attitudes toward emotions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 101(6), 1332-1350.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024951>

- Hasson, Y., Tamir, M., Brahms, K. S., Cohrs, J. C., & Halperin, E. (2018). Are liberals and conservatives equally motivated to feel empathy toward others?. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 44(10), 1449-1459. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167218769867>
- Hirsh, J. B., Deyoung, C. G., Xu, X., & Peterson, J. B. (2010). Compassionate liberals and polite conservatives: Associations of agreeableness with political ideology and moral values. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 36, 655-664.
doi:10.1177/0146167210366854
- Inbar, Y., & Lammers, J. (2012). Political diversity in social and personality psychology. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 7(5), 496-503. doi:10.1177/1745691612448792
- Iyengar, S., & Westwood, S. J. (2015). Fear and loathing across party lines: New evidence on group polarization. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3), 690-707.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/ajps.12152>
- Iyer, R., Koleva, S., Graham, J., Ditto, P., & Haidt, J. (2012). Understanding libertarian morality: The psychological dispositions of self-identified libertarians. *PLoS One*, 7.
doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0042366
- Jost, J. T., Glaser, J., Kruglanski, A. W., & Sulloway, F. J. (2003). Political conservatism as motivated social cognition. *Psychological Bulletin*, 129, 339-375.
doi:10.1037/0033-2909.129.3.339
- Koch, A., Imhoff, R., Dotsch, R., Unkelbach, C., & Alves, H. (2016). The ABC of stereotypes about groups: Agency/socioeconomic success, conservative–progressive beliefs, and communion. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 110(5), 675-709. doi:10.1037/pspa0000046

- Lammers, J., Koch, A., Conway, P., & Brandt, M. J. (2017). The political domain appears simpler to the politically extreme than to political moderates. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 8(6), 612-622. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1948550616678456>
- McCue, C. P., & Gopoian, J. D. (2000). Dispositional empathy and the political gender gap. *Women & Politics*, 21, 1-20. doi:10.1300/j014v21n02_01
- Olcaysoy Okten, I., & Saribay, S. A. (2019). Stereotype activation and self-regulation by conservatives and liberals in political encounters. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 159(1), 46-60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.2018.1447436>
- Osborne, D., Wootton, L. W., & Sibley, C. G. (2013). Are liberals agreeable or not? *Social Psychology*, 44, 354-360. doi:10.1027/1864-9335/a000132
- Pagano, S. J., & Huo, Y. J. (2007). The role of moral emotions in predicting support for political actions in post-war Iraq. *Political Psychology*, 28, 227-255. doi:10.1111/j.1467-9221.2007.00563.x
- Robinson, R. J., Keltner, D., Ward, A., & Ross, L. (1995). Actual versus assumed differences in construal: "Naive realism" in intergroup perception and conflict. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 68, 404-417. doi:10.1037//0022-3514.68.3.404
- Ross, L., & Ward, A. (1995). Psychological barriers to dispute resolution. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.) *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* (Vol. 27, pp. 255-304). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Scherer, A. M., Windschitl, P. D., & Graham, J. (2015). An ideological house of mirrors. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 6, 201-209. doi:10.1177/1948550614549385

- Simas, E. N., Clifford, S., & Kirkland, J. H. (2019). How empathic concern fuels political polarization. *American Political Science Review*, 1-12.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055419000534>
- Stern, C., & Crawford, J. T. (2020). Ideological conflict and prejudice: An adversarial collaboration examining correlates and ideological (a) symmetries. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550620904275>
- Strauss, C., Taylor, B. L., Gu, J., Kuyken, W., Baer, R., Jones, F., & Cavanagh, K. (2016). What is compassion and how can we measure it? A review of definitions and measures. *Clinical Psychology Review*, 47, 15-27. doi:10.1016/j.cpr.2016.05.004
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979). An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. In W. Austin & S. Worchel (Eds.), *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* (pp. 33-48). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Toner, K., Leary, M. R., Asher, M. W., & Jongman-Sereno, K. P. (2013). Feeling superior is a bipartisan issue: Extremity (not direction) of political views predicts perceived belief superiority. *Psychological Science*, 24(12), 2454-2462. doi:10.1177/0956797613494848
- Van Bavel, J. J., & Cunningham, W. A. (2012). A social identity approach to person memory. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38, 1566-1578.
doi:10.1177/0146167212455829
- Van Boven, L., Judd, C. M., & Sherman, D. K. (2012). Political polarization projection: Social projection of partisan attitude extremity and attitudinal processes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 103(1), 84-100. doi:10.1037/a0028145
- van Prooijen, J. W., Krouwel, A. P., Boiten, M., & Eendebak, L. (2015). Fear among the extremes: How political ideology predicts negative emotions and outgroup

derogation. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(4), 485-497.

doi:10.1177/0146167215569706

van Prooijen, J. W., Krouwel, A. P., & Emmer, J. (2018). Ideological responses to the EU refugee crisis: The left, the right, and the extremes. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 9(2), 143-150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550617731501>

Waytz, A., Iyer, R., Young, L., Haidt, J., & Graham, J. (2019). Ideological differences in the expanse of the moral circle. *Nature Communications*, 10.

doi:10.1038/s41467-019-12227-0

Westfall, J., Van Boven, L., Chambers, J. R., & Judd, C. M. (2015). Perceiving political polarization in the United States: Party identity strength and attitude extremity exacerbate the perceived partisan divide. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 10(2), 145-158.

doi:10.1177/1745691615569849

Zaki, J. (2014). Empathy: A motivated account. *Psychological Bulletin*, 140(6), 1608-1647.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0037679>