

Abigail (Abby) Cassario

PhD Candidate in Social/Personality Psychology
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Current Position

Graduate Student, The Belief Systems Lab, Department of Psychology, Michigan State University

Research Interests

Beliefs, Belief Systems, Ideology, Attitudes, Persuasion, Computational Social Science

Teaching Interests

Political Psychology, Social & Personality Psychology, Political Behavior, American Politics, Research Methods, Beliefs & Misinformation

Education

- 2026 PH.D. in Social/Personality Psychology, Michigan State University (expected)
- 2021 M.A. in Political Science, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
- 2019 B.A. in Political Science and Psychology, University of North Carolina at Asheville (Summa Cum Laude)

Grants & Fellowships

- 2025 *Co-Investigator*, \$5,000 Institute for Humane Studies (IHS) Grant (with Mark Brandt, PI). *Project: Testing Side Effects of Polarization Reduction Interventions*
- 2025 PolNet–PaCSS 2025 Graduate Student Fellowship
- 2025 Summer Institute in Social and Personality Psychology (attendee)
- 2022–2023 MSU Graduate Merit Assistantship
- 2019–2024 UNC Chapel Hill Department of Political Science Thomas Uhlman Fellowship (declined, 2022–2024)
- 2019 UNC Chapel Hill Graduate Merit Assistantship

Honors & Awards

- 2025 SPSP Student Publication Award for Best Graduate Student Publication in an SPSP Journal (for Cassario & Brandt, 2025)

Research

PEER REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

- 2025 Thompson, J. L., **Cassario, A. L.**, Rice, S., Gnall, S. A., Carrillo, A., Solanki, P., Vallabha, S., Brandt, M. J., & Wetherell, G. (Forthcoming). Registered report: Stress testing predictive models of ideological prejudice. *PLOS ONE*.
- 2025 Wetherell, G., Thompson, J. L., **Cassario, A. L.**, Brandt, M. J., Gnall, S., Rice, S., Solanki, P., Vallabha, S., & Carrillo, A. (in press). Do mismatches between individual and target group personality predict prejudice? *Collabra: Psychology*, *11*, 136887.
- 2025 **Cassario, A. L.**, Vallabha, S., Thompson, J. L., Carrillo, A., Solanki, P., Gnall, S. A., Wetherell, G., & Brandt, M. J. (2025). Registered report: Cognitive ability, but not cognitive reflection, predicts expressing greater political animosity and favouritism. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *64*(2), e12814.
- 2025 **Cassario, A. L.**, & Brandt, M. J. (2025). Testing theories of threat, individual difference, and ideology: Little evidence of personality-based individual differences in ideological responses to threat. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, *16*(6) 657-668‡
- ‡ Recipient of the SPSP Student Publication Award for Best Graduate Student Publication in an SPSP Journal, 2025.
- 2023 **Cassario, A. L.** (2023). Perceived vulnerability to infectious disease and perceived harmfulness are as predictive of citizen response to COVID-19 as partisanship. *Politics and the Life Sciences*, *42*(2), 277–290.
- 2019 Cox, K. S., Hanek, K. J., & **Cassario, A. L.** (2019). Redemption in a single low point story longitudinally predicts well-being: The incremental validity of life story elements. *Journal of Personality*, *87*(5), 1009–1024.

EDITOR REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

- 2023 Brandt, M. J., & **Cassario, A. L.** (2023). Distinguishing between worldview conflict and shared alliances: Commentary on Pinsof, Sears, and Haselton. *Psychological Inquiry*, *34*(3), 168–174.

SELECTED CURRENT PROJECTS

- 2025 **Cassario, A. L.**, Triki, A.[†], & Brandt, M. J. (Manuscript in preparation, target: *Political Behavior*). Threat exposure does not predict increased conservatism in three large experiments: Evidence from the U.S.
[†]Denotes mentored undergraduate student
- 2025 Triki, A.[†], **Cassario, A. L.**, & Brandt, M. J. (Manuscript in preparation, target: *Cognition*). American liberals and conservatives (mostly) respond the same to party cues.
- 2025 **Cassario, A. L.**, Vallabha, S., & Brandt, M. J. (Manuscript in preparation, target: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*). Central attitudes in political belief systems are more resistant to change but are not necessarily less responsive to persuasive interventions.
- 2025 **Cassario, A. L.**, & Brandt, M. J. (Data collection complete, target: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*). Conviction cascades: Moral conviction transmits through belief system ties.
- 2025 Brandt, M. J., & **Cassario, A. L.** (Data collection complete). Within-person fluctuations in daily stress do not predict political prejudice or engagement, but higher between-person stress does: Evidence from an EMA study.
- 2025 **Cassario, A. L.** (Data collection ongoing). Exploring the effects of anticipated, actual, and perceived downward mobility on political attitudes.

Invited Talks

- 2025 Cassario, A. L. (2025, Spring). Moral conviction transmits through belief system ties. Invited talk at the Interdisciplinary Consortium on Moral Decision Making, Pennsylvania State University, State College, PA.
- 2025 Cassario, A. L. (2025, Spring). Moral conviction transmits through belief system ties. Invited talk at the Inequality Working Group Meeting (virtual).

Conference Symposia (Organized)

- 2026 **Cassario, A. L.** (Chair). *Moral Minds in Polarized Times*. Symposium accepted for presentation at the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP) Annual Convention, Chicago, IL. February 2026.
Includes my talk: Conviction Cascades: Moral Conviction Transmits Through Belief System Ties.

Selected Conference Presentations

- 2025 **Cassario, A. L. & Brandt, M. J.** *Moral conviction transmits through belief system ties*. Poster presented at *MIT Directions of Polarization, Norms, and Trust in Societies*, Cambridge, MA, December 2025.
- 2025 **Cassario, A. L.** *Conviction cascades: Moral conviction transmits through belief system ties*. Talk presented at the *International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP) Annual Meeting*, Prague, Czech Republic, July 2025.
- 2024 **Cassario, A. L. & Brandt, M. J.** *Testing theories of threat, individual difference, and ideology: Little evidence of personality-based individual differences in ideological responses to threat*. Poster presented at the *Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP) Annual Convention*, San Diego, CA, February 2024.
- 2022 **Cassario, A. L.** *Not all motivated reasoning is partisan: Personality and harm perceptions limit the influence of partisanship in shaping citizens' perceptions of COVID-19*. Paper presented at the *Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA) Annual Meeting*, Chicago, IL, April 2022.

Teaching Experience

Introduction to Social Psychology (MSU, instructor of record)
Introduction to Personality Psychology (MSU, TA, grader)
Psychology of Women (MSU, TA, grader)
Introduction to R Programming and Statistics (MSU, TA, section instructor; UNC, TA, grader)
Introduction to American Politics (UNC, TA, section instructor)
Race, Innocence and the Death Penalty (UNC, TA, section instructor)

Professional Service

- 2023–2024 Graduate Student Advisory Committee (GSAC), Social/Personality Area Representative, Michigan State University Department of Psychology

Ad-hoc Reviewer

Legislative Studies Quarterly
Political Behavior
American Journal of Political Science
Journal of Personality and Social Psychology
British Journal of Social Psychology
Politics and the Life Sciences
Psychological Science
Social Psychological and Personality Science
Journal of Personality
Analysis of Social Issues and Public Policy

Computer Skills

R (Advanced)

Qualtrics (Advanced)

SAS (Intermediate)

SPSS (Intermediate)

MATLAB (Beginner)

Github (Beginner)

Python (Beginner)

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