# Abigail (Abby) Cassario

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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

Social Psychology, Personality Psychology, Political Psychology, Attitudes & Persuasion, Moral Psychology, Beliefs & Misinformation, Psychology of Prejudice, Research Methods/Statistics, Computational Social Science

## Education

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| 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

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|---|---|
| 2026 | $7,500 Michigan State University Dissertation Completion Fellowship (Summer 2026). *Project: Falling Short? Testing the Causal Effect of Downward Mobility on Populist Support* |
| 2025 | $1,000 Michigan State University Research Enhancement Award. *Project: Exploring the Effect of Threat Exposure on Political Ideology* |
| 2025 | $5,000 *Co-Investigator*, 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. (2025). Registered report: Stress testing predictive models of ideological prejudice. *Plos One*, *20(10)*, e0334152.

2025    Wetherell, G., Thompson, J. L., **Cassario, A. L.,** Brandt, M. J., Gnall, S., Rice, S., Solanki, P., Vallabha, S., & Carrillo, A. (2025). 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.

REVISE AND RESUBMIT

2026    Triki, A.[†], **Cassario, A. L.**, & Brandt, M.J. (Manuscript in preparation, target: *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*). There is more evidence for ideological symmetry than asymmetry in party cue effects across a representative sample of issues.
[†]Denotes mentored undergraduate student

UNDER REVIEW

2026    **Cassario, A. L.,** Vallabha, S., & Brandt, M. J. (Manuscript in preparation, target: *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*). Central attitudes are more resistent to change, but are not necessarily less responsive to persuasive interventions.

2026    **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.

SELECTED CURRENT PROJECTS

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    Brandt, M. J. & **Cassario, A. L.** (Data collection complete). Side sffects of depolarization interventions vary across intervention type.

2025    **Cassario, A. L.,** (In data collection). Exploring the effects of anticipated, actual, and perceived downward mobility on anti-democratic attitudes.

# Invited Talks

2026    Cassario, A. L. (2026, Spring). Exploring new insights into political belief dynamics, University of Illinois at Chicago, Chicago, IL.

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

2026    Cassario, A.L., Vallabha, S., & Brandt, M.J., (February, 2026). Central attitudes in political belief systems are more resistent to change, but not necessarily less amenable to targeted persuasive attempts. Spotlight early career data blitz. *SPSP Computational Psychology Preconference.*

2025    Cassario, A.L. & Brandt, M.J., (December, 2025). Moral conviction transmits through belief system ties. Poster presented at *MIT Directions of Polarization, Norms, and Trust in Societies*, Cambridge, MA.

2025    Cassario, A.L. & Brandt, M.J., (August, 2025). Moral conviction transmits through belief system ties. Poster presented at *PolNet-PaCSS Conference*, Cambridge, MA.

2025    Cassario, A. L. & Brandt, M.J., (2025, July). Moral conviction transmits through belief system ties. Talk presented at the *International Society for Political Psychology (ISPP) Annual Convention*, Prague, Czech Republic.

2025    Cassario, A. L. & Brandt, M.J., (2025, February). Mapping individual level belief systems. Poster presented at the *Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP) Annual Convention*, Denver, CO.

2024    Cassario, A. L. & Brandt, M.J., (2024, February). 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.

2022    Cassario, A. L. (2022, April). 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.

## 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)
LaTeX