Spring 2018

Partisan Stereotype Exaggeration: The Role of Like-Minded Media Consumption and Inter-Party Hostility

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Partisan Stereotype Exaggeration:

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and Inter-Party Hostility

By

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Accepted in Partial Completion
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Experimental Psychology

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Master's Thesis

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Kamran Hughes

May 8, 2018

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A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by
Kamran Hughes
May 2018

Abstract

The current study examines how like-minded media consumption and inter-party hostility contribute to the formation of political stereotypes. More specifically, I investigated stereotypes about Democrats' and Republicans' general willingness to accept inequality among social groups. Prior research indicates that political stereotypes tend to be exaggerations of actual liberal-conservative differences in personality. However, researchers know little about the factors contributing to Democrats' and Republicans' expression of exaggerated partisan stereotypes. I hypothesized that like-minded media consumption, inter-party hostility, and Democratic Party affiliation would be positive predictors of stereotype exaggeration. To test this hypothesis, 259 U.S. partisan adults completed the Social Dominance Orientation Scale. Using an instructional manipulation they took the scale three times: As themselves, as if they were the average Democrat, and as if they were the average Republican. Then participants completed measures of media consumption, inter-party hostility, and party affiliation. The data indicated that Democrats exhibited higher levels of stereotype exaggeration when compared to Republicans. Also, like-minded media consumption and inter-party hostility were positive predictors of stereotype exaggeration. Exploratory analyses indicated that like-minded media consumption predicted stereotype exaggeration which, in turn, was associated with lower expectations for public deliberation. I interpret the results by drawing on social identity theory and research in media studies.

Keywords: political stereotypes, media consumption, affective polarization

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my adviser Dr. Catherine Riordan for her thoughtful guidance throughout this project. Her careful feedback, along with the help of Dr. Jennifer Devenport and Dr. Kristi Lemm, made this work possible. My gratitude is also extended to my family for supporting my education and personal growth.

Table of Contents

List of Tables and Figures

Introduction

From 1994 to 2014 the number of partisans who strongly dislike their political rivals has doubled (*Pew Research Center*, 2014b). When I use the word 'partisans' I am referring to Democrats and Republicans, 20 percent of whom feel very cold towards their political rivals (Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018). In this highly polarized climate, partisans may insulate themselves from their political rivals by consuming media that agrees with their own stance. Like-minded media consumption is problematic because when people do not expose themselves to diverse viewpoints they become more intolerant (Cappella, Price, & Nir, 2002; Mutz, 2006). Ideological intolerance might manifest as hostile partisan stereotypes that would further reduce the quality of public deliberation amongst Democrats and Republicans. Mitigation of this conflict will require knowledge of why it is happening. One contributing factor described by leading political psychologist John Jost and colleagues is the psychological differences between liberals and conservatives (Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, & Sulloway, 2003; Scherer, Windschitl, & Graham, 2015).[1]

Within the motivated social cognition framework developed by Jost, liberals and conservatives differ in their level of traits falling into one of three categories: Epistemic, existential, and ideological (see Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009 for review). Epistemic traits refer to a person's tendencies for reducing feelings of uncertainty whereas existential traits concern how a person finds meaning in their lives. Ideological traits describe a person's willingness to accept inequality and resist change. Jost and colleagues argue there is an affinity between the

[1]Party affiliation and political ideology are closely related constructs. For this reason the literature I discuss concerning liberals and conservatives applies to Democrats and Republicans as well.

ideological, existential, and epistemic traits and the core tenets of conservatism. For example, social dominance orientation, an ideological trait traditionally associated with conservatives, describes a person's general willingness to accept inequality among social groups (Ho et al., 2012; Ho et al., 2015; Jost et al., 2003; Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). People's social dominance orientation may incline them to identify as conservative. In doing so, the policies they endorse are made consistent with their personality in a way that is satisfying.

Liberal-conservative differences in personality are not all that matter when explaining political polarization. Researchers also should take into account the social stereotypes people develop about these differences (Scherer et al., 2015). Social stereotypes, a more specific form of which are political stereotypes, refer to generalizations about groups of people (Allport, 1954). Social stereotypes are not to be confused with the related concept of prejudice which concerns stereotypes based on antipathy and inflexible generalizations. Stereotypes have a deep evolutionary history and are known to play a role in the conflict between groups, like that between Democrats and Republicans (Neuberg, Kenrick, & Schaller, 2010). The differences people perceive there to be between Democrats and Republicans can fuel conflict between these groups.

A growing body of research on political stereotypes investigates people's beliefs about the qualities of Democrats and Republicans (e.g. Chambers, Baron, & Inman, 2006; Chambers & Melnyk, 2006; Graham, Nosek, & Haidt, 2012; Judd & Park, 1993; Scherer et al., 2015). This research contributes to an understanding of partisan conflict. However, political psychologists lack insight into how social environments serve to reinforce partisan stereotypes (see Graham et al., 2012 for discussion). For example, they have not investigated the role of media usage in stereotype endorsement, which is surprising, given that media portrayals influence cultural

stereotypes (e.g. Murphy, 1998)**.** The current study examines the role of party affiliation and media consumption in predicting stereotype endorsement to expand the field's knowledge of the factors associated with partisan stereotypes.

Political stereotypes vary in their degree of accuracy (Judd & Park, 1993), which may be surprising, given that people often assume stereotypes are inherently inaccurate (Jussim, Crawford, & Rubenstein, 2015). The idea that stereotypes are fundamentally inaccurate has a long history in social psychology. Indeed, Katz and Braly (1935) claimed that stereotypes are, "Fixed impressions which conform very little to the facts [they] pretend to represent (p. 267)." Despite the widespread belief that stereotypes are inaccurate, there is little empirical support for such claims (Jussim et al., 2015). In fact, Jussim and colleagues (2016) conducted a meta-analysis and concluded that not only is stereotype accuracy one of the most replicable effects in social psychology, it is also one of the largest.

Political stereotypes, in particular, have some accuracy in that the direction of liberal-conservative differences are correct (Scherer et al., 2015). For instance, partisans perceive Republicans as having higher levels of social dominance orientation (SDO) than Democrats, and Republicans actually do have higher levels of this trait. Partisans understand liberal-conservative differences in personality giving their political stereotypes a *degree* of accuracy. Yet political stereotypes are not fully accurate because of the tendency to overestimate the magnitude of liberal-conservative differences in personality (Graham et al., 2012; Scherer et al., 2015). For example, consider the extent to which partisans differ in their SDO. This actual difference is smaller than the degree to which people perceive partisans as different in this trait. As a result, political stereotypes may tend to be caricature-like exaggerations helping party members set themselves apart from their political rivals.

One account of political stereotypes comes from social identity theorists, who posit that people differentiate their in-groups from their out-groups in a manner that positively reflects upon themselves (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). For example, Republicans might frame Democrats' pro-choice position as one condoning murder to make their own pro-life stance seem more reasonable by comparison. Greene (1999) was one of the first to apply social identity theory to party affiliation in the United States. He found a positive association between strength of party affiliation and the tendency for people to view their stance on policy issues as different from their political rivals. For instance, the more strongly someone identified as a Democrat, the more they tended to view their stance on abortion as different from Republicans. Later research built upon this idea by suggesting that Democrats and Republicans misrepresent their political rivals to depict themselves, and the group they associate with, in a more positive light (see Chambers & Melnyk, 2006 for discussion). Beyond making one's self and party look good, partisans might misrepresent their rivals because it is socially acceptable.

In politics, it is often socially acceptable to voice exaggerated stereotypes. However, when it comes to other topics such as race, people's stereotypes tend to underestimate group traits because it is socially desirable to appear unprejudiced (McCauley, 1995; McCauley & Stit, 1978). The same desire to appear unprejudiced does not apply to politics. Democrats and Republicans are sometimes open about expressing mild forms of prejudice such as intentionally avoiding contact with each other (Allport, 1954; Lelkes & Westwood, 2017). In fact, partisans may feel social pressure to overstate their negative feelings about out-party members (Lelkes, 2016). These negative feelings might manifest as hostile partisan stereotypes that reduce citizens' expectations for public deliberation of civic or political issues. One possibility is that when Democrats and Republicans endorse exaggerated partisan stereotypes they develop lower

expectations for public deliberation. That is, partisans may be less apt to productively engage with one another if they have misunderstandings about their political rivals' character and exaggerate the extent of their differences.

Liberals and conservatives have stereotypes about the moral character of one another (Graham et al., 2012). For instance, across the ideological spectrum people perceive conservatives as placing less emphasis on fairness and egalitarianism than liberals. People are getting the *direction* of liberal-conservative differences correct in that conservatives actually do tend to be less concerned about fairness and egalitarianism. However, the stereotypes are inaccurate in that people tend to overestimate the *magnitude* of moral differences between liberals and conservatives. Moreover, liberals, when compared to conservatives, tend to hold less accurate political stereotypes about the moral characteristics of people across the ideological spectrum (Graham et al., 2012). For example, liberals significantly underestimate the typical conservative's concern for mitigating harm and encouraging fair outcomes. Researchers have replicated this general finding for closely related traits such as SDO found in the motivated social cognition framework (Scherer et al., 2015).

Scherer and colleagues (2015) investigated political stereotypes about epistemic, existential, and ideological traits. Recall that the ideological traits, one of which is SDO, concerns people's acceptance of inequality. They sampled 219 participants whose political affiliations were largely representative of the U.S. population. Participants took an older version of the SDO Scale (Pratto et al., 1994) three times by adopting the perspective of the average Democrat, the average Republican, and themselves. They found participants who affiliated with both parties tended to exaggerate Republicans' level of SDO. For our purposes, there are two takeaways from this study. First, stereotype exaggeration was greatest for SDO when compared

to the other traits the authors examined. Second, and contrary to the authors' hypotheses, affiliation with the Democratic Party tended to be associated with higher levels of stereotype exaggeration. These findings suggest that Democrats stereotype Republicans as being more domineering and anti-egalitarian than they actually are.

In sum, people misunderstand the character of Democrats and Republicans. They tend to view Democrats and Republicans as more different than they actually are, a phenomena called stereotype exaggeration. While researchers have evidence that stereotype exaggeration occurs, there remain open questions about its origin. What role has the modern media environment played in people's endorsement of partisan stereotypes? Are reports of stereotype exaggeration expressions of inter-party hostility?

Media and Inter-Party Hostility as Contributors to Political Stereotypes

Like-minded media consumption occurs when people consume media coming from a source agreeing with their political views. For example, liberals and conservatives may rely on MSNBC and FOX respectively as their primary or sole source of political news (*Pew Research Center*, 2014a). Garrett and Stroud (2014) review three psychological explanations for why people consume like-minded media, all of which may have some validity. First, cognitive dissonance theory suggests that by consuming like-minded media people can avoid the psychological discomfort that often results from exposure to contradictory views (Festinger, 1962). Second, Ziemke (1980) argues that it is easier to process like-minded media. He theorizes that if people are cognitive misers, then it is only natural for them to select sources that are simpler to process. Third, empirical research indicates that people tend to view like-minded media as higher quality (Fischer, Schulz-Hardt, & Frey, 2008)**.** Thus, it would seem only natural for people to choose the perceived quality and comfort of like-minded media, especially given

the abundance of choice in the modern media environment.

Researchers disagree regarding the extent to which the modern media environment is conducive to like-minded media consumption. Iyengar and Hahn (2009) argue that the internet encourages like-minded media consumption by allowing people to self-select into niche online communities. There are a couple of caveats however, especially in regards to social media. First, social media usage can increase people's exposure to counter-attitudinal sources (Messing & Westwood, 2014). On major social media platforms people receive suggestions for content based on popularity. These suggestions often include ideologically diverse sources that people may not have otherwise encountered. Second, researchers demonstrated that not all of social media is an echo chamber because it depends on the type of issue people are discussing (Barbera, Jost, Nagler, Tucker, & Bonneau, 2015). They found that Twitter acts as an echo chamber for political issues more so than non-political issues. For instance, people are less inclined to engage in like-minded media consumption when discussing the Super Bowl as opposed to midterm elections. The point is that social media is not inherently an echo chamber. However, like-minded media consumption does happen on these platforms, and especially for political issues.

Iyengar and Hahn (2009) raise concerns over the consequences of like-minded media consumption. In particular, they suggest that like-minded media consumption may detract from the quality of public discourse by insulating people from competing ideas and promoting inter-party hostility. A body of empirical research provides support for this argument. Like-minded media consumption is linked to reduced tolerance for competing views (Cappella, Price, & Nir, 2002; Mutz, 2006), increased support for one's own party (Arceneaux, Johnson, & Cryderman, 2013; Levendusky, 2013; Stroud, 2010; Wojcieszak, Bimber, Feldman, & Stroud, 2015), and more negative stereotypes about out-party members (Garrett et al., 2014). Furthermore, like-

minded media consumption is associated with greater feelings of anger towards one's political

rivals (Hasell & Weeks, 2016). These findings suggest that like-minded media consumption can

lead people to feel more hostile towards their political rivals**.**

Affective polarization refers to the increasing level of mutual hostility between

Democrats and Republicans (Iyengar, Sood, & Lelkes, 2012). Political scientists note that

affective polarization has risen for 50 years and explain this trend using social identity theory

(Iyengar et al., 2012; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Partisans identify with their political party, and in

doing so, develop emotional attachments to it (Greene, 1999). Increasingly the emotional warmth

that partisans feel towards their in-party is accompanied by coldness towards their out-party

(Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018). Out-party hostility can be expressed in three different ways

(Iyengar et al., 2012): 1) as a kind of prejudice where partisans believe their political rivals

possess negative traits (e.g. being close-minded), 2) as partisans' reluctance to interact with rival

party members such as holding negative attitudes about their son or daughter marrying an out-

party member (see Bogardus, 1925 for discussion of social distance), and 3) as out-party hostility

that is seen when partisans harbor negative or cold feelings about their political rivals.

Given the divisive nature of affective polarization, researchers have expressed growing

interest in understanding its causes and consequences (e.g. Iyengar, Jackman, & Hahn, 2016;

Sood, Iyengar, & Dropp, 2012). A concern is that high levels of affective polarization might

detract from perceived governmental legitimacy or the right to rule (Iyengar et al., 2012). If

people feel disdain for their political rivals then they might not feel those rivals have the right to

implement policy. This tendency to view out-party governance as illegitimate may fuel

polarization even more. In addition to these political concerns are psychological ones, namely,

how affective polarization might encourage widespread endorsement of partisan stereotypes. For

example, party members exposed to hostile campaign ads tended to report higher levels of affective polarization and endorsed more negative stereotypes about their political rivals (Sood, Iyengar, & Dropp, 2012). This finding suggests a close relationship between inter-party hostility and partisans' endorsement of political stereotypes.

The purpose of the current study is to provide a more thorough and rigorous assessment of the factors contributing to partisan stereotypes. In doing so the current study helps to explain the divisiveness of contemporary politics, while being one of the first to investigate the affective and situational precursors to stereotype exaggeration. Based on prior research in media studies and political psychology, I pose four separate hypotheses. First, political stereotypes regarding SDO will be exaggerations of the actual psychological differences between liberals and conservatives. Second, Democrats will exhibit higher levels of stereotype exaggeration than Republicans. Third, like-minded media consumption will be a positive predictor of stereotype exaggeration. Fourth, the components of affective polarization (i.e., out-party trait ratings, feeling thermometer, and inter-party marriage) will be positive predictors of stereotype exaggeration.

Method

Participants

I recruited 301 U.S. participants via Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), each of whom had at least a 95% acceptance rate on past MTurk tasks. Researchers have used this acceptance criterion to collect at least one sample representative of the U.S. population regarding liberal-conservative differences in personality (Clifford, Jewell, & Waggoner, 2015). Also, MTurk samples report levels of SDO comparable to in-person samples (Gamblin, Winslow, Lindsay, Newsom, & Kehn, 2016). All participants received an informed consent form which can be

found in Appendix A. Each participant was paid 75 cents and the study took an average of 10 minutes to complete. Of the 301 participants, 14% did not identify with either the Democratic or Republican Party and were excluded from analyses (see Table 1 for full sample demographics). I used this exclusion criterion because only Democrats and Republicans have a clear in-party and out-party.

The final sample consisted of 259 participants. Each participant completed the Social Dominance Orientation Scale as a Democrat, a Republican and as themselves. At the end of each SDO Scale I asked participants which perspective they had adopted while completing the measure. These three items were manipulation checks. Eighty-four percent of participants passed all three manipulation checks, 6.2% passed two, 8.1% passed one, and 1.5% passed none. I did *not* exclude participants for failing manipulation checks because results stayed the same regardless.

Sixty-seven percent of participants identified as Democrats and 33% Republican. The mean age in the sample was 36.42 years with 50% of participants identifying as female and 50% male. Seventy-five percent of the sample identified as White, 11.6% African American, 8.4% Asian, .8% American Indian, .4% Native Hawaiian, and 2.8% other. The median level of education was a bachelor's degree, and the median income was $40,000-$50,000 a year. Overall, the sample was typical of the MTurk participant pool: Largely White, younger, and left-leaning (Berinsky et al., 2012; Huff & Tingley, 2015).

Measures

   SDO Scale. The newest version of the SDO Scale (Ho et al., 2015) measures a person's tendency to be domineering and anti-egalitarian. Dominance refers to a person's desire for subjugating groups they have deemed subordinate, and anti-egalitarianism concerns a person's

preferences for maintaining an unequal distribution of resources. The SDO Scale asks participants to rate the degree to which they *Strongly Oppose*(1) to *Strongly Favor*(7) a series of 16 statements. Example items include, "Some groups of people must be kept in their place," and, "Group equality should not be our primary goal." Higher scores indicate a greater level of SDO. Since I asked participants to take the SDO Scale from three perspectives, there are three measures of reliability (Average Democrat $\propto$ = .95; Average Republican $\propto$ = .94; Self $\propto$ = .94).

Like-minded media consumption. Hasell and Weeks (2016) created a four-item measure of pro- and counter-attitudinal media usage. The scale asks participants how often they consume news from two liberal sources and two conservative sources. An example item includes, "How often do you consume news from a major national organization that is frequently characterized as favoring liberal positions or Democratic candidates, such as The New York Times or MSNBC?" Response options range from 1(*Never*) to 5(*Very Often*). A variable for pro-attitudinal media consumption was calculated by taking participants' average consumption of like-minded sources ($\propto$ = .61). Similarly, the variable for counter-attitudinal media averaged participants' consumption of attitude-inconsistent sources ($\propto$ = .65). A variable for like-minded media consumption was calculated by taking participants' average consumption of like-minded sources and subtracting from it their average consumption of counter-attitudinal sources (Like-minded media consumption = Average consumption of pro-attitudinal sources – average consumption of counter-attitudinal sources). Higher scores represent a greater degree of like-minded media consumption.

Affective polarization. I used three measures of affective polarization drawn from Iyengar and colleagues (2012). Affective polarization concerns the widening gap between how warm partisans feel towards their in-party versus their out-party. The following measures of

11

feeling thermometer, inter-party marriage, and out-party trait ratings assess this affective divide.

First, participants reported how favorable they felt toward Democrats and Republicans using two scales. Response options range from 1(*Very unfavorable*) to 7(*Very favorable*). I took each participant's in-party rating and subtracted from it their out-party rating. The higher a participant's feeling thermometer score, the more disapproving they were of their out-party.

Second, participants completed a two-item measure of social distance assessing how they would feel if their son or daughter married a Democratic/Republican Party supporter. Response options range from 1(*Very upset*) to 5(*Very pleased*). I took how pleased participants would be with an in-party marriage and subtracted from it how pleased they would be with an out-party marriage. Higher scores suggest that participants were more inclined towards socially distancing themselves from their political rivals.

Third, participants described the extent to which they agree rival party members possess a series of traits. There were five traits with positive valence and five traits with negative valence. I used the same traits as Iyengar and colleagues (2012) except for 'intolerant.' I added this trait because I view it as a negative attribute that is highly relevant to today's public discourse. The negative traits were intolerant, hypocritical, selfish, mean, and close-minded ($\propto$ = .89). The positive traits were patriotic, intelligent, honest, open-minded, and generous ($\propto$ = .77). Response options ranged from 1(*Strongly disagree*) to 7(*Strongly agree*). For each participant I took the average of the negative trait ratings and subtracted from it the average of the positive trait ratings. Higher scores indicate a stronger belief that one's political rivals possess negative qualities.

Social media engagement. Participants completed a four-item measure of social media engagement ($\propto$ = .83) drawn from Yang, Barnidge, and Rojas (2017). Participants were asked

how often they read, share, and express their views about current events on social media. An example item is, "How often do you use social media to express your views on current issues?" Response options ranged from 1(*Never*) to 5(*Very often*). Higher scores indicate greater engagement with social media.

Expectations for public deliberation. To begin to connect partisan stereotypes to political behavior, I asked about participants' expectations for the civic process of public meetings. They were asked to imagine themselves at a town hall meeting with approximately 30 people discussing national policy issues. The instructions are adapted from Hwang, Kim, and Huh (2014) (see Appendix C). At this hypothetical meeting, participants were to imagine there would be both Democrats and Republicans. Participants answered four questions about their expectations for how this meeting would go ($\propto$ = .87). An example item includes, "The conversation would resolve conflicts among participants with differing views on the issues." Response options ranged from 1(*Strongly disagree*) to 7(*Strongly agree*). The greater a participant's average score, the more positive their expectations were for the discussion.

Party affiliation. To measure party affiliation I presented participants the following question, "In general, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, a Democrat, an independent, or something else?" (American National Election Studies, 2008). If participants selected Republican or Democrat, they received a follow-up question asking them if they leaned Democrat/Republican or if they were strongly Democrat/Republican. If participants selected either independent or something else they received an additional question asking if they thought of themselves as closer to being a Democrat, Republican, or neither. Participants who leaned towards the Democratic or Republican Party were classified as partisans in accordance with conventional practice (e.g. Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018). If they selected neither then they were

classified as independents and I did not include them in the subsequent analyses.

Design

The current study adopted the methodology for assessing stereotype exaggeration used by Scherer and colleagues (2015). It is a three level within-subjects design. The independent variable was the viewpoint through which participants took the SDO Scale. The dependent variable was the degree of stereotype exaggeration participants reported. Stereotype exaggeration was computed by taking participants' mean SDO when they completed the scale as the average Republican and subtracting from it their mean SDO when they completed the scale as the average Democrat (Stereotype exaggeration = mean SDO as average Republican - mean SDO as average Democrat). The resulting variable represents the degree to which participants perceived Democrats and Republicans as having different levels of SDO. I call this variable the perceived spread score.

Procedure

Participants received the informed consent form using the Qualtrics survey site. They indicated their agreement to the consent terms by clicking the forward arrow at the bottom of the screen. Then they were provided instructions about how they would adopt three different viewpoints when taking the SDO Scale as the average Democrat, as the average Republican, and as themselves. I asked participants which viewpoint they had adopted after completing each scale. These items served as manipulation checks. Appendix B contains the manipulation check and viewpoint instructions. Viewpoint order was counterbalanced by randomly assigning participants to one of the six possible viewpoint orders. I created a nominal variable representing the order with which each participant took the surveys to assess possible order effects.

Upon completing the scale and manipulation checks from all three viewpoints,

participants completed items measuring party affiliation, voting behavior, and political ideology. Next, they were then given measures of affective polarization, like-minded media consumption, social media engagement, and expectations for public deliberation. The order of these scales was randomized to mitigate order effects. Finally, participants answered questions regarding their demographic characteristics. These included age, gender, ethnicity, state of residence, political ideology, income, and education. Upon completing the demographic questions, participants were thanked and provided with a debriefing statement.

Results

Testing for Partisan Stereotype Exaggeration

Using SPSS 25.0, I conducted all confirmatory tests at $\alpha = .05$. Table 2 contains the means and standard deviations for all continuous variables in the current study. There were no order effects. A one-way between-subjects ANOVA found no effect of order on stereotype exaggeration, $F(5, 253) = 0.99$, $MSE = 4.96$, $p > .05$. In the section that follows I use a question and answer format to test hypothesis one: Political stereotypes regarding SDO will be exaggerations of the actual psychological differences between liberals and conservatives.

Do political stereotypes regarding SDO exist?

Yes. A one-sample *t*-test indicated that participants perceived the average Republican (*M* = 4.99, *SD* = 1.36) as being higher in SDO than the average Democrat (*M* = 2.28, *SD* = 1.29), $t(258) = 32.17$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.00$. Figure 1 depicts overlapping histograms that describe partisans' perception of the average Democrat's and the average Republican's level of SDO.

Do these stereotypes reflect actual liberal-conservative differences in personality?

Yes. An independent samples *t*-test revealed that Republicans (*M* = 3.40, *SD* = 1.29), when rating themselves, reported higher SDO than did Democrats when rating themselves (*M* =

1.96, *SD* = 1.08), *t*(257) = -9.45, *p* < .001, *d* = 1.25. Figure 2 contains violin plots that depict the distribution of actual Democrats' and Republicans' SDO.

Are these stereotypes exaggerations of actual liberal-conservative differences?

Yes. First, I calculated the actual spread which was equal to Republicans' mean SDO minus Democrats'. Second, I determined the perceived spread which was equal to participants' mean SDO as the average Republican minus their mean SDO as the average Democrat. Third, I conducted a one-sample *t*-test which revealed that the perceived spread was greater than the actual spread, *t*(258) = 9.22, *p* < .001, *d* = .57. In other words, participants perceived Democrats and Republicans as more different in their level of SDO than they actually were.

Which party was more so the subject of exaggerated political stereotypes?

Participants reported stereotype exaggeration. To clarify the source of the exaggeration I calculated the extent to which participants overestimated each party's level of SDO. I calculated an exaggeration-about-Democrats score by taking participants' mean SDO as the average Democrat and subtracting from it the mean SDO of actual Democrats in the sample. Similarly, I calculated an exaggeration-about-Republicans score by taking participants' mean SDO as the average Republican and subtracting from it the mean SDO of actual Republicans. Overall, the exaggeration-about-Republicans score was positive and significantly different from zero, *t*(258) = 18.90, *p* < .001, *d* = 1.17, as was the exaggeration-about-Democrats score, *t*(258) = 3.97, *p* < .001, *d* = .25. The exaggeration-about-Republicans score was larger than the exaggeration-about-Democrats score, *t*(258) = 15.10, *p* < .001, *d* = .93. Participants exaggerated Republicans' level of SDO to a greater degree than they did Democrats'.

In sum, participants evidenced partisan stereotypes in that they perceived the average Republican as higher in SDO than the average Democrat. These stereotypes mirrored actual

liberal-conservative differences in personality in that Republicans in the sample actually were higher in SDO. Furthermore, participants perceived Democrats and Republicans as more different in their SDO than they truly were. In other words, they reported stereotype exaggeration. Reports of exaggerated stereotypes resulted from participants overestimating Republicans' level of SDO.

Bivariate Correlations

Bivariate correlations were calculated among all of the continuous variables in the current study (i.e., social media engagement, expectations for public deliberation, party affiliation, out-party trait ratings, feeling thermometer, inter-party marriage, like-minded media consumption, stereotype exaggeration). I conducted point-biserial correlations for gender with each of the continuous variables. Male participants were coded as a 1 and female participants coded as a 2. I used Spearman Rank Order Correlations to examine the relationship between the one ordinal variable, education, and the continuous variables. Of particular interest were the correlations between stereotype exaggeration and the independent variables described in the hypotheses. Stereotype exaggeration was statistically significantly correlated with party affiliation ($r(257) = -.38$, $p < .001$), like-minded media consumption ($r(257) = .37$, $p < .001$), feeling thermometer ($r(257) = .21$, $p < .01$), out-party trait ratings ($r(257) = .33$, $p < .001$), and inter-party marriage ($r(257) = .19$, $p < .01$). Table 3 contains all correlations.

Testing the Precursors to Stereotype Exaggeration

I used regression analyses to test hypotheses two, three, and four. Hypothesis two is that Democrats will exhibit higher levels of stereotype exaggeration than Republicans. Hypotheses three and four, respectively, are that like-minded media consumption and affective polarization will be positive predictors of stereotype exaggeration. To test these hypotheses I analyzed the

data using hierarchical linear regression. The independent variables were gender, education, social media engagement, party affiliation, like-minded media consumption, feeling thermometer, inter-party marriage, and out-party trait ratings. The dependent variable was stereotype exaggeration. Stereotype exaggeration was calculated by taking participants' mean SDO as the average Republican and subtracting from it participants' mean SDO as the average Democrat. I begin by reporting the correlations which are most relevant to the hypotheses. Then I confirm that the assumptions of linear regression were met before testing four models.

Meeting Assumptions of Linear Regression

I confirmed that four assumptions of multivariate regression analyses were met. First, to evaluate if there were problems with heteroscedasticity, the standardized residuals for this regression analysis were plotted against the standardized predicted values (see Figure 3). There was no indication of heteroscedasticity in this graph of residuals; however, there appeared to be a few outlier cases. Second, I calculated a Mahalanobis distance value for each participant which indicated the existence of three outlier cases ($df = 8$, $p < .001$, cutoff = 26.13) (see Kannan & Manoj, 2015). I included the few outlier cases in my analyses because results did not change when these data points were excluded. Third, and consistent with best practices (Cain, Zhang, & Yuan, 2017), I tested the assumption of normality. To do this I examined the skewness of the standardized residuals ($\gamma_1 = -.80$). The distribution was negatively skewed reflecting the tendency for partisans to perceive Republicans as higher in SDO than Democrats. A reflected log base 10 transformation of the dependent variable, stereotype exaggeration, did not change the results. Fourth, I checked for issues with multicollinearity by examining the correlations among the independent variables (see Table 3). No correlations exceeded .7, suggesting a sufficient level of statistical independence amongst the predictor variables. In sum, I met the assumptions necessary

for conducting multivariate regression analyses, with the exception of a distribution of residuals that is negatively skewed.

Control Variables

For each of the regression models I included three control variables. I did this to more accurately assess the unique contribution of party affiliation, like-minded media consumption, and affective polarization to stereotype exaggeration. First, I used gender as a control variable because women tend to associate themselves with the Democratic Party (*Pew Research Center*, 2016c), and Democrats tend to express higher levels of stereotype exaggeration than Republicans (Scherer et al., 2015). Second, higher education is tied to Democratic Party affiliation so I added education as a control variable (*Pew Research Center*, 2016a). Third, I included social media engagement as a control variable because it could potentially affect stereotype exaggeration. For instance, when people engage with social media they may expose themselves to more sources disagreeing with their views (Messing & Westwood, 2014). This counter-attitudinal exposure might provide people with a more accurate view of their political rivals thereby reducing their stereotype exaggeration.

Model One: Control Variables Predicting Stereotype Exaggeration

The purpose of model one was to establish a baseline for the predictive ability of the control variables. Party affiliation, affective polarization, and like-minded media consumption should then predict stereotype exaggeration above and beyond the controls. In the first model, gender, education, and social media engagement together were statistically significant predictors of stereotype exaggeration, $F(3, 255) = 10.44$, $p < .001$, $MSE = 4.47$, $R^2 = .11$. Gender was a statistically significant positive predictor of stereotype exaggeration with female participants reporting higher levels of stereotype exaggeration than male participants did. Social media

engagement was a statistically significant negative predictor of stereotype exaggeration. Education was not a statistically significant predictor of stereotype exaggeration, though its beta weight was in the predicted direction. Table 6 contains the results of the hierarchical regression analyses.

Model Two: Party Affiliation Predicting Stereotype Exaggeration

In the second model party affiliation was added because prior research has suggested Democratic Party affiliation is associated with higher levels of stereotype exaggeration (e.g. Scherer et al., 2015). The combination of the controls and party affiliation were statistically significant predictors of stereotype exaggeration, $F(4, 254) = 20.38$, $p < .001$, $MSE = 3.82$, $R^2 = .24$. Party affiliation added a statistically significant change in the prediction of stereotype exaggeration, $\Delta F(1, 254) = 44.83$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .13$ (see Tables 4 and 5). Female participants reported statistically significantly higher levels of stereotype exaggeration than male participants did. Social media engagement and party affiliation were statistically significant negative predictors of stereotype exaggeration. The more strongly participants identified with the Democratic Party the greater their level of stereotype exaggeration. Education was not a statistically significant predictor of stereotype exaggeration. Model two suggests that party affiliation is an important contributor to stereotype exaggeration above and beyond gender, social media engagement, and education.

Model Three: Media Consumption and Inter-Party Hostility Predicting Stereotype Exaggeration

In model three I entered like-minded media consumption and the components of affective polarization (i.e., out-party trait ratings, feeling thermometer, and inter-party marriage). I added these variables to test the hypotheses that like-minded media consumption and affective

20

polarization would be positive predictors of stereotype exaggeration. Figure 4 depicts model three of the hierarchical multiple regression using standardized coefficients. The combination of the control variables, party affiliation, like-minded media consumption, and the components of affective polarization were statistically significant predictors of stereotype exaggeration, $F(8, 250) = 14.62$, $p < .001$, $MSE = 3.49$, $R^2 = .32$. Like-minded media consumption and the components of affective polarization added a statistically significant change in the prediction of stereotype exaggeration, $\Delta F(4, 250) = 6.95$, $p < .001$, $\Delta R^2 = .07$. Gender, social media engagement, and party affiliation remained statistical significant predictors of stereotype exaggeration. Out-party trait ratings and like-minded media consumption were both statistically significant positive predictors of stereotype exaggeration. Education, feeling thermometer, and inter-party marriage were not statistically significant predictors of stereotype exaggeration. The takeaway is that like-minded media consumption was a robust predictor of stereotype exaggeration because its beta weight was statistically significant even with a set of rigorous controls. Only the out-party trait rating component of affective polarization was a statistically significant predictor of stereotype exaggeration.

Model Four: Like-Minded Media Consumption → Stereotype Exaggeration → Expectations for Public Deliberation

I tested an exploratory model to better understand how media consumption impacts attitudes towards public deliberation. This model uses stereotype exaggeration as a mediator of the relationship between like-minded media consumption and expectations for public deliberation. To reduce the probability of a type two error the alpha level was set to .10. I conducted these analyses using the Hayes' (2013) PROCESS macros (Model 4). As in the confirmatory analyses, gender, social media engagement, and education were kept as control

variables. I choose to have indirect effects bootstrapped 5000 times. In this model, the independent variable was like-minded media consumption, the mediator was stereotype exaggeration, and the dependent variable was expectations for public deliberation. That is, I tested whether like-minded media consumption exerts its effect on expectations for public deliberation through stereotype exaggeration. Figure 5 depicts the mediation model using unstandardized regression coefficients.

Like-minded media consumption was a statistically significant positive predictor of stereotype exaggeration, $b = 0.64$, $SE = .10$, $p < .001$. In addition, like-minded media consumption was a statistically significant negative predictor of expectations for public deliberation, $b = -.13$, $SE = .07$, $p < .10$. That is, participants who consumed more media consistent with their own views tended to have lower expectations for the quality of public deliberation between Democrats and Republicans. When I controlled for stereotype exaggeration, like-minded media consumption was no longer a statistically significant predictor of expectations for public deliberation, $b = -.07$, $SE = .08$, $p > .35$. These findings suggest that stereotype exaggeration fully mediates the relationship between like-minded media consumption and expectations for public deliberation. The combination of like-minded media consumption, stereotype exaggeration, and the control variables explained 8% of the variance in expectations for public deliberation, $F(5,253) = 4.68$, $MSE = 1.97$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .08$. A Sobel test indicated a small negative indirect effect of like-minded media consumption on expectations for public deliberation, $b = -.06$, $SE = .03$, $Z = -2.00$, $p < .05$. In other words, greater like-minded media consumption predicted higher levels of stereotype exaggeration which, in turn, predicted lower expectations for public deliberation.

Discussion

The current study reveals the relationship between media consumption, inter-party hostility, and partisan stereotypes. In particular, I investigated stereotypes about the average Democrat's and the average Republican's level of SDO. Social dominance captures a person's general willingness to accept inequality between social groups (Ho et al., 2012; Ho et al., 2015; Pratto et al., 1994). Furthermore, this trait is tied to conservativism, disagreeableness, and prejudice (Ekehammar, Akrami, Gylje, & Zakrisson, 2004). Using an instructional manipulation and the SDO Scale (Ho et al., 2015), I examined partisan stereotype exaggeration. Partisan stereotypes are characterized by people viewing the personalities of Democrats and Republicans as more different than they actually are (e.g. Scherer et al., 2015). The current study helps to explain why.

Partisan stereotypes about SDO exaggerated actual liberal-conservative differences in this trait. I found three supporting pieces of evidence for the existence of partisan stereotypes. First, I demonstrated the existence of political stereotypes by findings that participants perceived Republicans as having higher levels of SDO than Democrats. Interestingly, participants perceived the average Democrat and Republican as more different in their level of SDO than in the 2015 study by Scherer and colleagues. This finding may be the result of a divisive 2016 presidential election with campaign ads promoting both inter-party hostility and caricature-like political stereotypes (see Sood, Iyengar, & Dropp, 2012 for discussion of campaign ads). Second, participants reported political stereotypes that reflected actual liberal-conservative differences in personality. Not only were Republicans perceived as higher in SDO than Democrats, Republicans in the sample actually were higher in this trait. This finding replicates a large body of work which uses the motivated social cognition framework to describe how liberals and

conservatives differ in their personality (see Jost et al., 2003 for review).

Third, participants perceived Democrats and Republicans as being more different in SDO than partisans in the sample actually were. In other words, participants reported stereotype exaggeration and did so in a manner consistent with prior research using the older version of the SDO Scale (Pratto et al., 1994; Scherer et al., 2015). The current study adds to the literature by demonstrating that participants report stereotype exaggeration when completing the most recent version of the SDO Scale (Ho et al., 2015). This contribution provides a new form of pragmatic validity for social dominance theory by suggesting that researchers can use its most recent measure for investigating partisan stereotypes (Graham et al., 2012; Pratto et al., 1994).

Partisan stereotypes tended to exaggerate the average Republican's level of SDO more than the average Democrat's. That is, participants perceived Republicans as higher in SDO than Republicans in the sample actually were. The same was true for Democrats but to a much lesser extent. This may have to do with the fact that high SDO is traditionally associated with Republicans (Scherer et al., 2015). Partisans may tend to exaggerate the characteristics of political groups that they perceive as high rather than low on a given trait. The reason is that high levels of a trait will tend to receive more of partisans' attention making them more likely to be the subject of cognitive biases. For instance, partisans might notice Republicans' high level of SDO then proceed to actively look for evidence that Republicans are high in this trait. Confirmation bias of this kind may lead partisans to develop exaggerated beliefs about how Democrats and Republicans differ in their SDO (see Nickerson, 1998 for review of confirmation bias). If I used a trait such as openness to experience that is associated with liberals (Scherer et al., 2015), then maybe Democrats' high level of this trait would be the subject of confirmation bias, resulting in Democrats rather than Republicans becoming the subject of exaggerated

24

stereotypes.

If we define prejudice as holding social stereotypes with antipathy and inflexibility (Allport, 1954), then participants who reported stereotype exaggeration may be exhibiting prejudice. It depends on their attitudes towards SDO. Unlike out-party trait ratings where the valence of each item is clear (e.g. 'close-minded' is negative), on the SDO Scale some of the items have ambiguous valence. For instance, consider this item, "It's probably a good thing that certain groups are at the top and other groups are at the bottom." Whether it is hostile to describe a party member as endorsing an item like this will depend on whom you ask. For Republicans, given their willingness to accept inequality (e.g. Jost et al., 2003), they may have a more neutral or even positive attitude towards SDO. Democrats, in contrast, tend to be in favor of egalitarianism and are likely at odds with the explicitly anti-egalitarian sentiment underlying SDO. As a result, Democrats' expression of stereotype exaggeration may constitute prejudice because of a hostile sentiment underlying it. Furthermore, if Democrats were to inflexibly exaggerate *all* Republicans' endorsement of anti-egalitarianism then this would be further evidence of prejudice. This conclusion is consistent with the idea that partisans are comfortable expressing mild forms of prejudice towards their political rivals (Lelkes & Westwood, 2017).

I found that Democrats expressed higher levels of stereotype exaggeration than Republicans. This finding is consistent with some studies (Graham et al., 2012; Scherer et al., 2015); however, it contradicts existing research on how liberals and conservatives differ in their tendency to stereotype. For instance, one argument is that conservatives tend to rely on stereotypes because they promote feelings of certainty (Stern, West, & Rule, 2015). Accordingly, research has found that conservatives tend to hold unfavorable attitudes towards counter-stereotypic people and dislike them because they take away from their feelings of certainty about

the social world. This bias for certainty helps explain why conservatives tend to rely on physical appearance stereotypes when categorizing people as gay or straight (Stern, West, Jost, & Rule, 2013). What do these findings imply for public discourse? Olcaysoy Okten and Saribay (2018) found that while anticipating a conversation with someone holding opposing ideological views, conservatives tended to activate political stereotypes while liberals did not. Liberals exhibited more of the self-regulation necessary to suppress their stereotypes than did conservatives. Democrats might be better than Republicans at suppressing political stereotypes, even if they are more likely to report endorsing some of them.

Social identity theorists can explain why Democrats reported higher rates of stereotype exaggeration (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Democrats may distinguish themselves from Republicans by exaggerating how different the two parties are in terms of SDO. Since Democrats are likely to view SDO negatively, the lower they are on this trait relative to Republicans the better. Republicans, in contrast, might view SDO as more positive thereby reducing their incentive to differentiate themselves from Democrats on this trait. In other words, Republicans have less of a reason to report stereotype exaggeration because doing so does not reflect positively on their in-group like it does for Democrats. The takeaway is that partisans' attitudes towards traits are crucial to consider. These attitudes shape how Democrats and Republicans will use partisan stereotypes to distinguish themselves from their political rivals.

Media Consumption and Affective Polarization as Predictors of Stereotype Exaggeration

Partisans who consumed more like-minded media in the form of blogs and television shows evidenced *higher* stereotype exaggeration. In contrast, partisans who shared, mobilized, and read articles on social media tended to have *lower* levels of stereotype exaggeration. Perhaps counterintuitively, social media platforms can encourage cross-cutting exposure (Messing &

Westwood, 2014). This exposure occurs when platforms recommend content to users based on social endorsements rather than whether the source has a liberal or conservative bias. Most social media platforms have a section listing the most liked or shared posts which can encourage users to consume content disagreeing with their views. The same cross-cutting recommendations do not occur when individuals use TV as their news source because the platform lacks liking and sharing. For this reason, traditional media platforms (e.g. TV) might be more likely to encourage like-minded consumption and in doing so magnify stereotype exaggeration and its negative consequences for public deliberation.

Partisans who consumed more like-minded blogs and TV shows reported increased stereotype exaggeration which, in turn, predicted lower expectations for public deliberation. One might argue that stereotype exaggeration affects partisans' expectations for public deliberation, while having a negligible impact on *actual* deliberation. Why is that? When partisans engage in public deliberation they may rely primarily on information about individuals rather than political stereotypes (see Crawford, Jussim, Madon, Cain, & Stevens, 2011 for discussion of political person perception model). For instance, imagine a town hall meeting consisting of Democrats and Republicans. They may enter the meeting with discouraging partisan stereotypes, but then discard them as they learn about the individuals in attendance. Alternatively, those same discouraging stereotypes may set in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy (see Fleming & Jussim, 1996 for review). Attendees' reliance on discouraging stereotypes rather than information about individuals may increase the odds that their low expectations come true. This self-fulfilling prophecy is a troubling possibility. As partisans' low expectations are realized their stereotypes about Democrats and Republicans may become more entrenched and hostile.

I found partial support for the idea that inter-party hostility encourages stereotype

exaggeration. Attitudes about inter-party marriage and the feeling thermometer did *not* predict stereotype exaggeration. However, out-party trait ratings did. Out-party trait ratings assess inter-party antipathy by measuring the degree to which partisans describe their political rivals using negative traits (e.g. being hypocritical). As such, out-party trait ratings are a measure of prejudice. The observed relationship between out-party trait ratings and stereotype exaggeration provides additional support for the idea that reports of stereotype exaggeration are indicative of prejudice. This interpretation suggests that affective polarization, and its trait rating component in particular, can have negative psychological consequences in the form of more prejudice. Put simply, one form of prejudice between Democrats and Republicans fuels another.

The current study's findings stand in contrast to prior research which has focused on the political, rather than psychological, consequences of affective polarization (Iyengar et al., 2012). For instance, one political consequence of affective polarization might be that partisans view the government as less legitimate when out-party members are elected. The present results provide some support for the idea that affective polarization has negative consequences for politics *and* the psyche. That is, inter-party hostility might promote polarizing stereotypes. These stereotypes are a product of human social cognition and its long history of fueling conflict between groups (e.g. Neuberg et al., 2010). Indeed, conflict between Democrats and Republicans might be reduced if they understood that they are more similar to each other than they think (Graham et al., 2012).

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study faces four main limitations. First, I used a self-report measure of like-minded media consumption that may lack in construct validity. The fragmentation of the modern media environment has made it increasingly difficult to define what constitutes 'political' media

(Dilliplane, Goldman, & Mutz, 2013). When people do not know what qualifies as political media, it becomes more challenging for them to provide accurate estimates of their consumption. Compounding the problem is the fact that people typically think about what channels they watch not how long they watched it. For instance, a person might remember they watched MSNBC, but find it cognitively taxing to recall how long they viewed the channel. Future research would do well to measure like-minded media consumption with a behavioral paradigm that is more ecologically valid (see Iyengar & Hahn, 2009; Messing & Westwood, 2014). Such a paradigm might entail developing a web application that discreetly tracks users' engagement with content. Another alternative would be to ask participants if they regularly consume content from an inclusive list of media platforms (Dilliplane et al., 2013).

Second, I used a potentially unreliable measure of like-minded media consumption. This measure was a difference score constructed by taking participants' pro-attitudinal media consumption and subtracting from it their counter-attitudinal consumption. As Trafimow (2005) notes, the reliability of a difference score is impacted by the reliability of its component measures. Both measures of pro and counter-attitudinal media consumption had low reliability suggesting that my measure of like-minded media consumption was unreliable. Similarly, I used brief measures of inter-party marriage and the feeling thermometer which may have had low reliability because they had so few items. This helps to explain why these two scales did not predict stereotype exaggeration. Future researchers would do well to develop more reliable self-report measures of affective polarization and like-minded media consumption for when behavioral measures are not viable. Third, I only included Democrats and Republicans in my analyses because they have a clear in-party and out-party. This inclusion criterion makes it difficult to assess how stereotype exaggeration operates in independent voters who constitute

roughly 40 percent of the population (*Pew Research Center*, 2016b).

Fourth, the direction of causality is difficult to assess because I used correlational analyses. For instance, like-minded media consumption might have caused stereotype exaggeration, or vice versa, stereotype exaggeration might have caused like-minded media consumption. If partisans view their political rivals as vastly different from themselves (i.e., high stereotype exaggeration), then they may be more motivated to avoid counter-attitudinal content and consume like-minded media. One can make a similar point about affective polarization. Stereotype exaggeration may fuel inter-party hostility rather than the other way around. Future studies could experimentally manipulate affective polarization, via a priming paradigm, to evaluate its effect on stereotype exaggeration. Alternatively, a longitudinal design, as opposed to the current study's cross-sectional one, would provide more compelling causal support (see Turnes & Ernst, 2016 for discussion of longitudinal mediation). For instance, researchers could measure affective polarization and like-minded media consumption during a pretest, and then assess stereotype exaggeration during the posttest six months later.

Theoretical Implications

The current study begins an exploration of the situational factors (e.g. media consumption) explaining stereotype exaggeration. Furthermore, it serves as a foundation for research examining the person by situation interactions which underlie stereotype exaggeration (see Higgins, 1990 for discussion of this theoretical framework). For instance, openness to experience, a person factor, may interact with like-minded media consumption, a situational factor, to explain stereotype exaggeration. The idea is that partisans with high openness would be less prone to like-minded media consumption and its encouragement of political stereotypes. These person by situation interactions are vital to study for many reasons including, but not

limited to, their impact on public deliberation. Consider that the current polarized political climate (e.g. Iyengar & Krupenkin, 2018), a situational factor, might interact with partisan stereotypes, a person factor, to make pubic deliberation less productive. This example highlights how partisan stereotypes, and their consequences, are integrally connected with a dynamic social environment.

Concluding Remarks

> "Deliberation may be defined as civil interaction between citizens for the purpose of analyzing a social or political issue. As such, it is reasonable to conceive of this communicative practice as the heart and soul of democracy. (*Center for Communication Research*, 2010)"

I found that higher levels of stereotype exaggeration predict lower expectations for public deliberation. This finding implies that the differences partisans perceive there to be between Democrats and Republicans matter (Scherer et al., 2015). Given the importance of partisan stereotypes, it is only natural to study their precursors. This study showed that like-minded media consumption, and to some extent affective polarization, lead to increased stereotype exaggeration. These findings speak to how the modern media environment might be influencing partisans' beliefs about the qualities of Democrats and Republicans in ways that could further polarize politics. In addition, these findings expose a hostility underlying partisans' endorsement of political stereotypes about SDO. Most importantly, the current study's findings reveal something insidious about exaggerated partisan stereotypes. Exaggerated stereotypes may be hurting a central facet of democracy: Public deliberation. Ultimately, a deeper understanding of political stereotypes will be essential for promoting productive conversations amongst Democrats and Republicans.

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Table 1

Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Education, Income, and Party Affiliation for Full Sample (N = 301)

Variable	N	%
1. Age		
20 to 30	121	40.2
30 to 40	94	31.2
40 to 50	44	14.6
50 to 60	31	10.3
60 +	11	2.3
2. Gender		
Male	153	50.8
Female	148	49.2
3. Ethnicity		
White	218	72.4
Black or African American	30	10
Asian	26	8.6
Other	11	3.7
American Indian	2	0.7
Native Hawaiian	1	0.3
4. Education		
High school graduate or less	22	7.3
Some college to associates	106	35.2
Bachelors to masters	166	55.2
Doctoral to professional	7	2.3
5. Income		
29,999 or less	76	25.3
30,000 to 59,999	113	37.5
60,000 to 89,999	57	18.9
90,000 to 150,000 +	55	18.3
6. Party Affiliation		
Democrat	174	57.8
Republican	85	28.2
Independent or other	42	14

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviations for Each of the Continuous Regression Variables (N = 259)

Variable	*M*	*SD*	*Scale Endpoints*
Affective polarization			
1. Out-party trait ratings	1.97	2.40	-6 to 6
2. Feeling thermometer	3.12	2.02	-6 to 6
3. Inter-party marriage	1.16	1.44	-4 to 4
4. Party affiliation	-0.83	2.16	-3 to 3
5. Like-minded media	0.99	1.19	-4 to 4
6. Social media engagement	2.52	0.93	1 to 5
7. Public deliberation	4.23	1.45	1 to 7
8. Stereotype exaggeration	2.72	2.23	-6 to 6

Note: Like-minded = Like-minded media consumption; Public deliberation = Expectations for public deliberation; Higher party affiliation scores represent stronger affiliation with the Democratic Party

Table 3

Bivariate Correlations for each Variable in the Regression Analysis (N = 259)

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Gender	-									
2. Education	-.07	-								
3. Party Affiliation	-.12	-.01	-							
4. Like-minded media	.10	.14*	-.39***	-						
5. Social media	-.11	.09	-.05	-.04	-					
6. Feeling Thermometer	.06	.06	-.30***	.55***	.09	-				
7. Inter-Party Marriage	-.07	.10	.17**	.39***	.10	.51***	-			
8. Out-Party Trait Rating	.09	.00	-.27***	.41***	.01	.54***	.51***	-		
9. Stereotype exaggeration	.19**	.04	-.38***	.37***	-.23***	.21**	.00	.33***	-	
10. Public deliberation	.07	-.02	-.04	-.11	.23***	.01	-.16**	-.21**	-.20**	-

Note: $^{*}p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$; two-tailed. Like-minded media = Like-minded media consumption; Social media = Social media engagement; Public deliberation = Expectations for public deliberation

Table 4

A Model Summary for Controls, Party Affiliation, Like-Minded Media Consumption, and

Affective Polarization as Predictors of Stereotype Exaggeration at Each Step (N = 259)

Model	R	R^2	SEE	ΔR^2	ΔF	df 1	df 2	p
1. Controls								
	.33	.11	2.11	.11	10.44	3	255	< .001
2. Party affiliation								
	.49	.24	1.95	.13	44.83	1	254	< .001
3. Media and affect								
	.56	.32	1.87	.08	6.95	4	250	< .001

Note: *SEE* = Standard Error of the Estimate; Controls = gender, education, and social media engagement; Affective polarization = out-party trait ratings, feeling thermometer, and inter-party marriage

Table 5

ANOVA Summary Tables for Controls, Party Affiliation, Like-Minded Media Consumption, and

Affective Polarization as Predictors of Stereotype Exaggeration at Each Step (N = 259)

Model	Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
1	Regression	140.05	3	46.68	10.44	< .001
	Residual	1140.33	255	4.47		
	Total	1280.38	258			
2	Regression	311.13	4	77.78	20.38	< .001
	Residual	969.25	254	3.816		
	Total	1280.38	258			
3	Regression	408.10	8	51.01	14.62	< .001
	Residual	872.28	250	3.49		
	Total	1280.38	258			

Note: Controls = gender, education, and social media engagement; Affective polarization = out-party trait ratings, feeling thermometer, and inter-party marriage

Table 6

Results of the Hierarchical Linear Regression Analyses with Controls, Party Affiliation, Like-Minded Media Consumption, and Affective Polarization as the Independent Variables at Each Step Predicting Stereotype Exaggeration (N = 259)

Model	Variables	B	SE B	β	t	p	sr²	95% CI lower	upper
1	(Constant)	2.14	0.70						
	Gender	1.01	0.27	.23	3.81	< .001	.23	0.49	1.54
	Education	0.15	0.10	.09	1.43	.16	.08	-0.06	0.35
	Social Media	-0.63	0.14	-.26	-4.43	< .001	-.26	-0.92	-0.35
2	(Constant)	2.21	0.65						
	Gender	0.80	0.25	.18	3.24	< .01	.18	0.31	1.29
	Education	0.15	0.09	.09	1.61	.108	.09	-0.03	0.34
	Social Media	-0.67	0.13	-.28	-5.07	< .001	-.26	-0.93	-0.41
	Party Aff.	-0.38	0.06	-.37	-6.70	< .001	-.37	-0.49	-0.27
3	(Constant)	1.89	0.63						
	Gender	0.72	0.24	.16	2.99	< .01	.16	0.24	1.19
	Education	0.14	0.09	.08	1.53	.13	.08	-0.04	0.32
	Social Media	-0.62	0.13	-.26	-4.86	< .001	-.25	-0.88	-0.37
	Party Aff.	-0.27	0.06	-.26	-4.49	< .001	-.25	-0.39	-0.15
	Like-Minded	-0.37	0.13	.20	2.92	< .01	.15	0.12	0.61
	Feeling Ther.	-0.09	0.08	-.08	-1.16	.25	-.06	-0.25	0.06
	Out-Party	0.19	0.06	.20	3.09	<.01	.16	0.07	0.31
	Inter-Party	0.03	0.10	.02	0.33	.74	.02	-0.17	0.24

Note: Inter-Party = Inter-Party Marriage; Out-Party = Out-Party Trait Ratings; Like-Minded = Like-Minded Media Consumption; Social Media = Social Media Engagement; Party Aff. = Party Affiliation; Feeling Ther. = Feeling Thermometer; Controls = gender, education, and social media engagement; Affective polarization = out-party trait ratings, feeling thermometer, and inter-party marriage
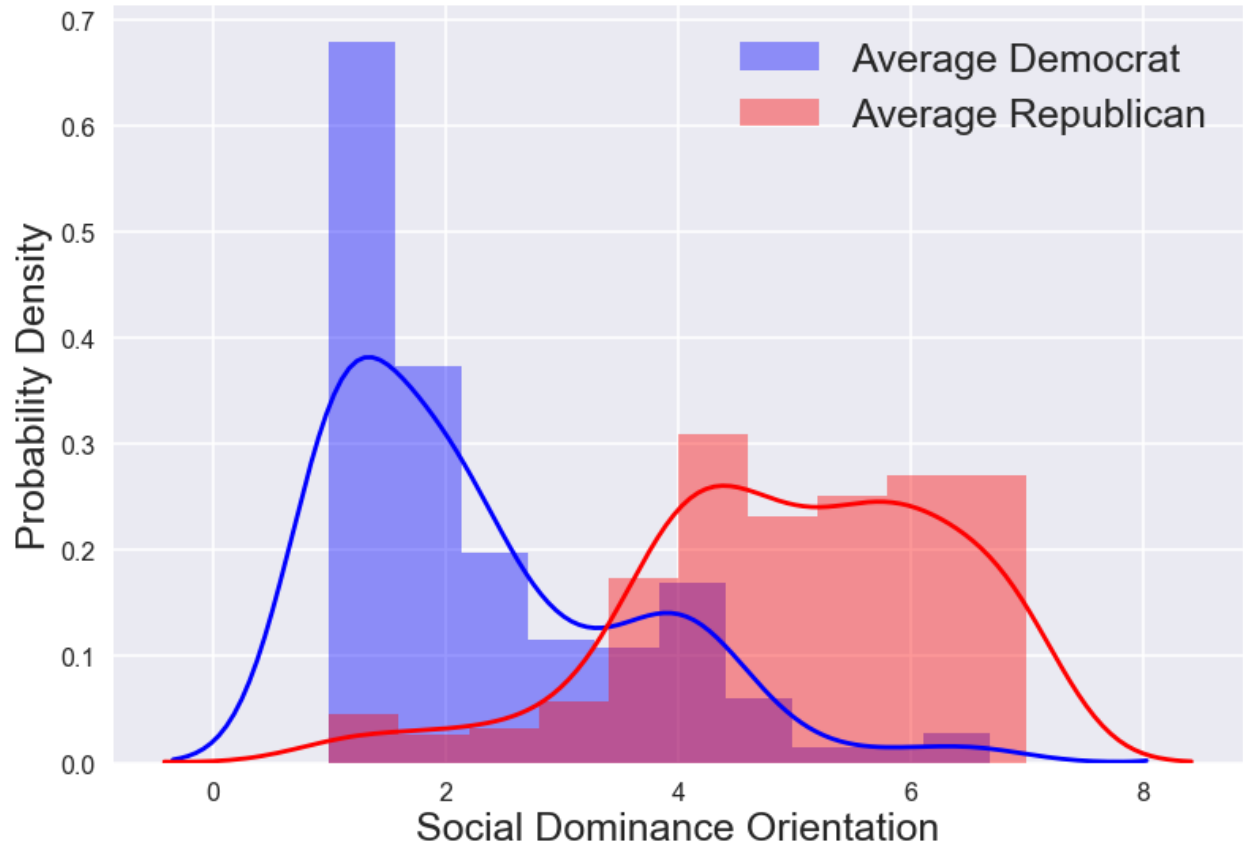
Figure 1. Overlapping histograms, featuring kernel density estimation, describing partisan stereotypes about the average Democrat's and the average Republican's level of SDO. This figure illustrates that partisans perceived that average Republican as higher in SDO than the average Democrat by a large margin, $t(258) = 32.17$, $p < .001$, $d = 2.00$.
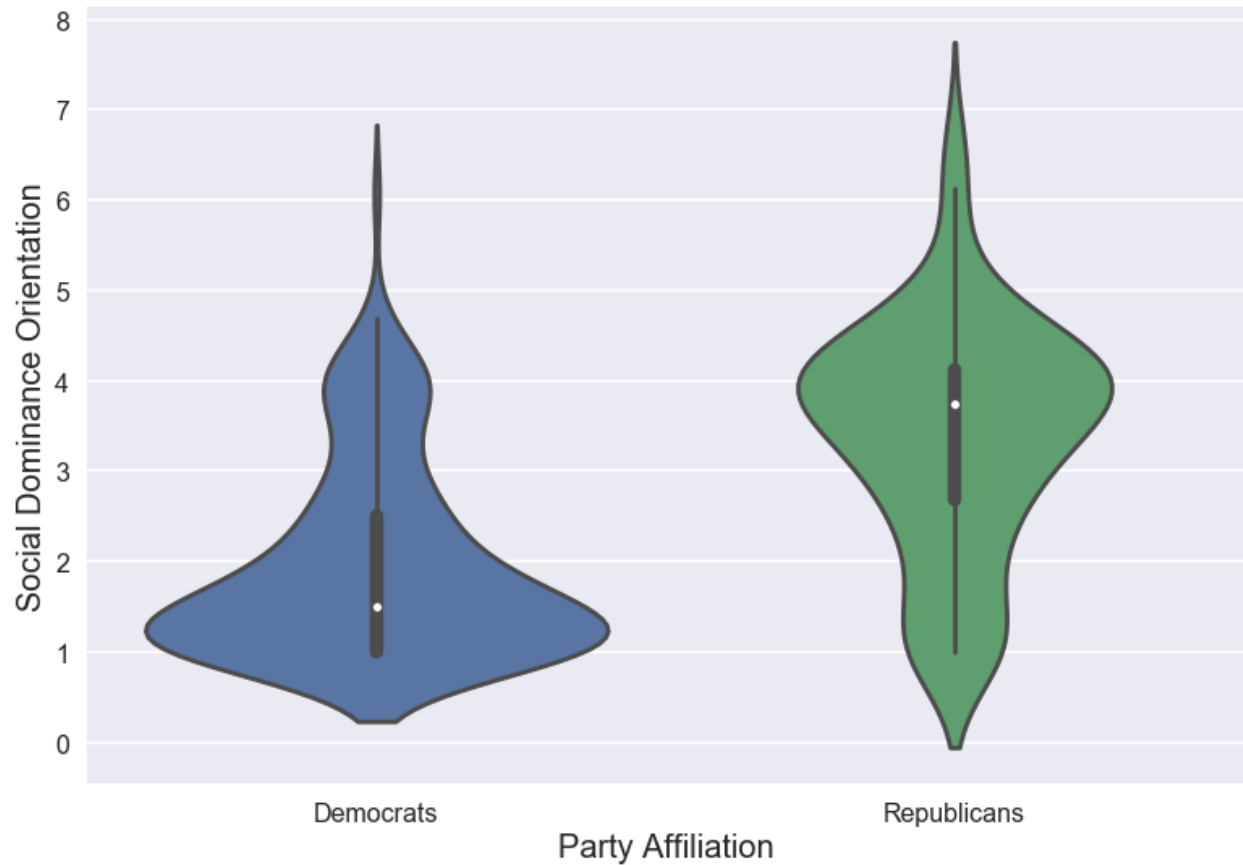
Figure 2. Violin plot depicting how actual Democrats and Republicans in the sample differed in their SDO. This figure demonstrates that actual Republicans in the sample had higher SDO than actual Democrats in the sample, $t(257) = -9.45$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.25$.
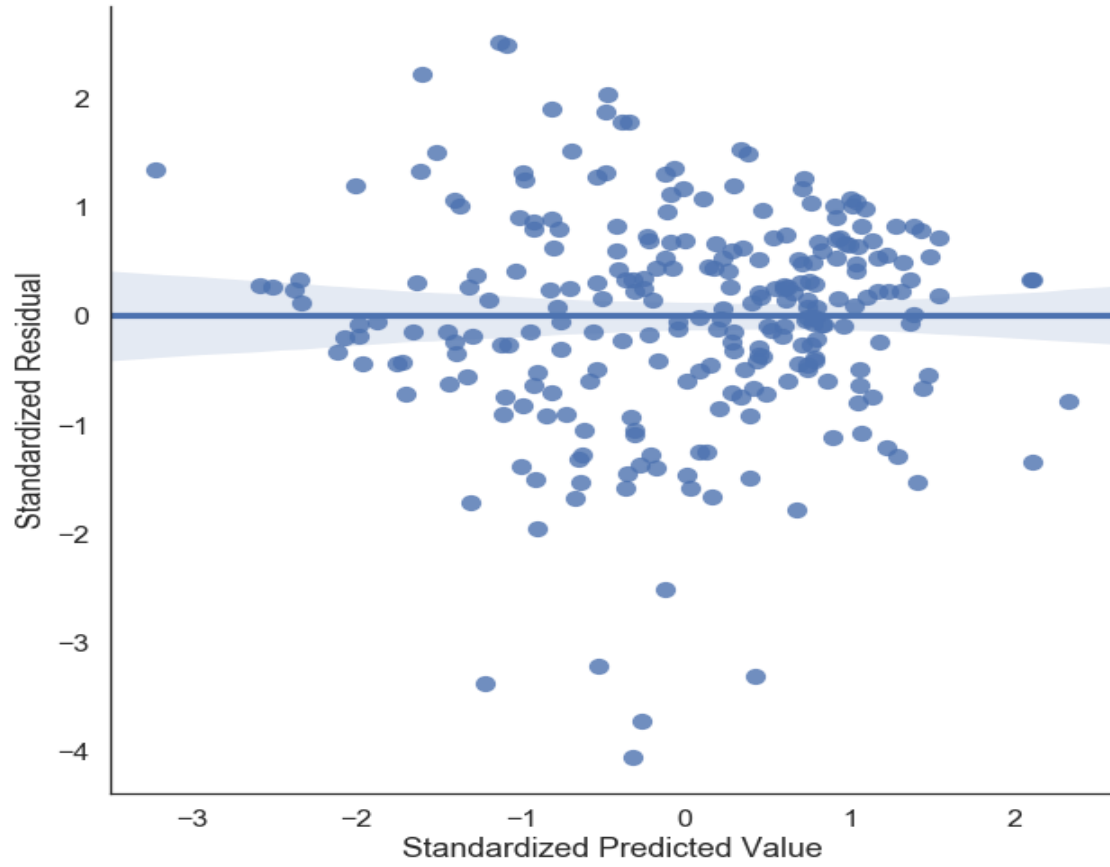
Figure 3. Graph of the standardized residuals for hierarchical multiple regression.
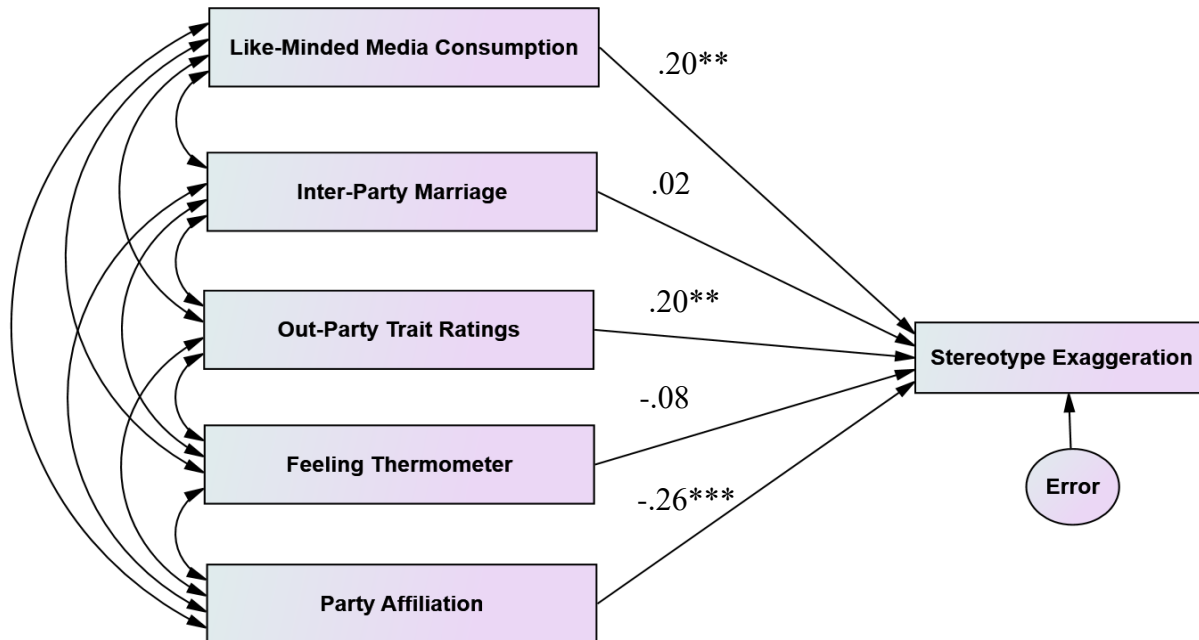
Figure 4. Results of hierarchical multiple regression using standardized coefficients; Social media engagement, education, and gender included as control variables, $F(4, 254) = 20.38$, $p <$ .001, $MSE = 3.82$, $R^2 = .24$. $^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$.
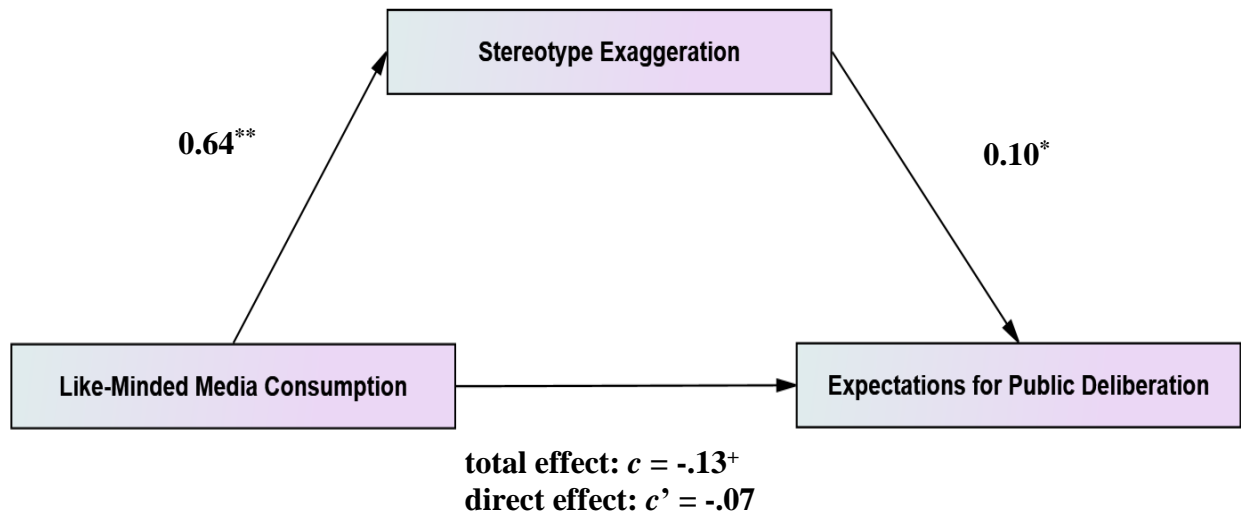
Figure 5. Unstandardized regression coefficients for stereotype exaggeration mediating the

relationship between like-minded media consumption and expectations for public deliberation.

$^+p < .10$; $^*p < .05$; $^{**}p < .01$; $^{***}p < .001$

Appendix A

The Psychology of Political Ideology

Welcome to "The Psychology of Political Ideology," an experiment investigating the intricacies of political ideology being conducted by students at Western Washington University. This online survey will take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Informing you about the study and formally seeking your consent is standard practice in our studies.

Consent Form

This study is about how political information is processed. It is being conducted by Kamran Hughes. Please ask the researcher to explain anything you do not understand in regards to the procedures.

There are no potential risks associated with participation in this study. You can decide not to join the study. If you join the study, you can change your mind and quit at any time. There will be no penalty or loss of services or benefits if you decide to not take part in the study or quit later. You also have the right to choose not to respond to any item on the survey.

This is an online survey that will take about 10 to 15 minutes to complete. You cannot take part in this study if you are under the age of 18. If you take part in this study you will be asked to rate statements about how you deal with certain situations or feelings. After completing the survey you will read a debriefing that outlines the study in more detail.

By participating in this study you are expanding the knowledge base of the field of psychology. You may also gain a greater understanding of the measurement of psychological constructs and the formation of your own attitudes.

After the completion of the study you may contact the researcher for information about the full range of the study and the results by sending an email to hughesk6@wwu.edu. You may choose not to participate in this study at any time.

The data for this study are being collected confidentially. Neither the researcher(s) nor anyone else will be able to link your responses to you. The results may be published or presented at professional meetings, but the identities of all research participants will not be disclosed. In compliance with professional guidelines, the data will be kept for 3 years on a password protected computer and flash drive.

Questions about your rights as a research subject should be directed to: Research and Sponsored Programs Office at (360) 650-2146 or compliance@wwu.edu. In the event you suffer any

adverse effects as a result of your participation, you should contact the primary researcher at hughesk6@wwu.edu or the Research and Sponsored Programs Office listed above.

By clicking the arrow and continuing:

- You understand the information given to you in this form
- You have been told how you can ask questions and state any concerns
- You acknowledge that the researcher has responded to any questions you've submitted
- You believe you understand the research study and the potential benefits and risks that are involved.

You are encouraged to print a copy of this consent form for your records.

Appendix B

Instructions for Experimental Manipulation

On the following pages, you will be answering the same set of questions from three different perspectives: average Democrat, average Republican, and your own personal perspective. On the top of each page we state the perspective you are to adopt for that page in bold and italics. We will ask you about the perspective at the end of the page.

Thank you for paying close attention to these instructions.

SDO Scale Instructions (Ho et al., 2015) (Prompt wording influenced by Graham et al., 2012)

Indicate how much you think the ***average Republican (Democrat)*** would favor or oppose each idea below. Use the following rating scale: *Strongly Oppose – Strongly Favor.* You can work quickly; your first feeling is generally best. Remember, instead of selecting your own answers; answer all the questions as the average Democrat (Republican).

Viewpoint manipulation check

I just took this page of the survey as…..

Response options: the average Democrat, the average Republican, the average independent, myself

Appendix C

Expectations for Public Deliberation (adapted from Hwang et al., 2014)

Instructions: Imagine yourself taking part in a town hall meeting that consists of both Democrats and Republicans. There are approximately 30 people at the meeting and they are discussing national policy issues. Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements about how the discussion will go.

The conversation would resolve conflicts among participants with differing views on the issues.

The conversation would be useful for participants to gain a better understanding of the issues.

The conversation would help participants see the issues from multiple perspectives.

The conversation would lead participants to be more open to the opposing views.

(Response options range from 1(*Strongly disagree*) to 7(*Strongly agree*))