

You may think you're right... Young adults are more liberal than they realize

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Abstract:

Do people have biased perceptions of their political orientation? Based on the link between political conservatism and in-group loyalty, we predicted that people would underestimate their liberalism and that this effect would be more pronounced among political conservatives. Young adults indicated their self-perceived political orientation and completed an objective measure of political orientation, which placed them along a liberal-conservative continuum by comparing their attitudes on 12 core issues (e.g., gay marriage, welfare) to population norms. Participants showed a significant bias toward perceiving themselves as more conservative than they actually were, and this effect was more pronounced among independents and conservatives than liberals. Further, biased self-perceptions of political orientation predicted voting behavior in the 2012 Presidential Election after controlling for objective political orientation scores. Discussion highlights theoretical implications for self-knowledge research and practical implications for American politics more broadly.

Keywords: self-perception | self-knowledge | political orientation | liberalism | conservatism | social psychology | personality science

Article:

Self-knowledge is essential for the successful navigation of everyday life. Nonetheless, self-perceptions of competence and personality are often inaccurate (Dunning, Heath, & Suls, 2004; Vazire & Carlson, 2011). For example, self-perceptions of performance show only moderate relations with objective performance measures including grades, supervisor evaluations, and teacher evaluations (Mabe & West, 1982; Zell & Krizan, 2013). Additionally, self-perceptions of personality (e.g., extraversion, conscientiousness) show only moderate relations with other ratings of personality (Kenny & West, 2010; Vazire & Carlson, 2010). These absences in self-insight are partly attributed to informational processes; people sometimes lack sufficient feedback to judge themselves accurately (Caputo & Dunning, 2005). However, self-knowledge

deficits can also arise from motivational processes; self-evaluation can be biased by a desire to view the self positively (e.g., Guenther & Alicke, 2010; Sedikides & Gregg, 2008).

Much progress has been made in advancing our understanding of self-knowledge (see Dunning, 2005; Vazire & Wilson, 2012), but the present research goes beyond by identifying an untapped domain in the self-knowledge literature. Specifically, we examine whether people have biased perceptions of their political orientation. In countries where there are two-party political systems, people typically identify themselves as fitting within either the liberal or the conservative party (Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009). But are people's perceptions correct? Are people who identify as liberal really liberal? Are people who identify as conservative really conservative? These questions are of critical importance when considering that self-perceptions of political orientation strongly predict voting intentions and behavior (Jost, 2006). If people have biased perceptions of political orientation, they may vote for candidates who fail to support their views.

To our knowledge, no research has directly examined self-insight of political orientation. However, emerging research suggests that people may be more liberal than they realize. First, whereas most Americans identify themselves as conservative, most Americans would be characterized as liberal by their attitudes on a variety of specific issues including poverty, education, and the environment (e.g., Free & Cantrill, 1967; Stimson, 2004). Similarly, although liberal policies such as health care reform often receive mixed reviews, people strongly support specific provisions of these policies when they are presented independently (e.g., allowing children to remain on their parent's health care plan until the age of 25; Enten, 2012). Second, Americans tend to support greater distribution of wealth than is observed in American society, and mistakenly assume that financial resources are distributed more equitably than they actually are (Norton & Ariely, 2011). Third, although Americans have become increasingly liberal on several issues such as gay marriage, marijuana legalization, and immigration (Plaue, 2012), Americans have also become increasingly more likely to identify themselves as politically conservative (Florida, 2011). Despite these emerging findings, systematic studies have not examined whether people generally have biased perceptions of their political orientation, and whether such biases are stronger in some populations than others.

Drawing upon research linking political conservatism with in-group loyalty (Graham et al., 2013), we argue that underestimation of liberalism may be more prevalent among people who are relatively conservative. According to moral foundations theory (Haidt & Graham, 2007), liberals and conservatives have different sets of moral values. Whereas liberals can be characterized by concerns for harm and fairness, conservatives can be characterized by concerns for purity, obedience to authority, and in-group loyalty. More specifically, conservatives place higher value on loyalty to one's family, country, religion, and ethnicity than do liberals (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009). We propose that this desire for in-group loyalty might lead conservatives to self-identify more with the political in-group than liberals. As a result, people who are relatively conservative might label themselves as being more conservative than they actually are, as measured by their attitudes on specific political issues.¹

Furthermore, research suggests that political conservatism is associated with self-enhancement. In a sample of over 8,500 Internet respondents, self-rated conservatism was significantly associated with self-deceptive enhancement, that is, the tendency to have distorted self-perceptions that are overly favorable in nature (Jost et al., 2010). Additionally, endorsement of fair market ideology, defined as the belief that market-based economies are fair and just, is significantly associated with both political conservatism and self-enhancement (Jost, Blount, Pfeffer, & Hunyady, 2003). Therefore, conservatives may not only place greater value on in-group loyalty than liberals, but due to increased self-enhancement, they may also come to see themselves as more prototypical members of valued in-groups than liberals. For this reason, biases in self-perceptions of political orientation should be more pronounced among those who are relatively conservative.

Three studies were conducted, two with college students and one with an Internet sample, to explore whether people underestimate their liberalism. In each study, participants provided self-perceptions of political orientation and completed an objective assessment of political orientation, which compared participant's attitudes on 12 core issues to population norms. A bias was predicted, such that self-perceptions of political orientation would be more conservative than objective political orientation scores derived from participant's attitudes on specific issues. Further, it was anticipated that biases in self-perceptions of political orientation would be more pronounced among people who identified themselves as politically conservative as opposed to liberal.

Study 1

College students indicated their self-perceived political orientation and completed an objective measure of political orientation. These measures were compared to explore whether self-perceptions of political orientation were significantly biased. Consistent with past research, we presumed that young adults would more often identify with the Democratic than Republican Party (Gallup, 2012). Unique to the current context, we also anticipated a self-perception bias whereby college students would think that they were more conservative (less liberal) than they actually were and that this effect would be more pronounced among students who were relatively conservative.

Method

One hundred ninety-nine college students at a university in the Southeastern United States completed the study for course credit (138 female, 55% Caucasian, 25% African American, M age = 20.34). It was emphasized throughout that questionnaire responses were completely anonymous and students completed study measures in private booths. First, students were asked to indicate which of seven categories they thought best matched their political views (see Table 1). The following categories were presented from left to right: Liberal Democrat (1), Average

Democrat (2), Moderate Democrat (3), Independent (4), Moderate Republican (5), Average Republican (6), and Conservative Republican (7).

Table 1. Distribution of Self-Perceived and Actual Political Orientation.

Political Party	Self-Perceived (%)	Actual (%)
Study 1		
Liberal Democrat	13.1	39.2
Average Democrat	25.6	12.6
Moderate Democrat	11.6	17.6
Independent	28.1	14.6
Moderate Republican	12.6	10.1
Average Republican	6.0	4.0
Conservative Republican	3.0	2.0
Study 2		
Liberal Democrat	27.8	63.3
Average Democrat	15.6	10.8
Moderate Democrat	15.8	7.8
Independent	28.3	8.1
Moderate Republican	7.8	3.9
Average Republican	3.6 3	.6
Conservative Republican	1.1	2.5
Study 3		
Liberal Democrat	14.3	30.5
Average Democrat	14.3	13.0
Moderate Democrat	14.3	14.9
Independent	14.3	13.6
Moderate Republican	14.3	11.7
Average Republican	14.3	6.5
Conservative Republican	14.3	9.7

Next, participants completed a political attitudes quiz created by the Pew Research Center (PBS Newshour, 2012). This instrument had participants indicate their agreement with 12 attitude statements on core issues in American politics (e.g., gay marriage, welfare; $\alpha = .68$). The questionnaire had been previously administered to a representative sample of Americans to develop a weighting scheme that places respondents into one of the seven political categories listed above. The weighting scheme estimates the degree to which participant's responses match those who are typical of each group and places them into a category of best fit (Pew Research Center, 2012). Objective political orientation scores were coded using the same scheme we utilized to code self-reported political orientation. Additional details on the political party quiz and scoring procedures are presented in the Appendix.

Results

There were no significant differences in self-perception bias as a function of age, gender, or race. Across the entire sample, self-perceptions of political orientation were significantly correlated with objective scores ($r = .57, p < .001$). As anticipated, however, self-ratings of political orientation ($M = 3.32, SD = 1.58$) were significantly more conservative than objective political orientation scores generated by the Pew quiz ($M = 2.64, SD = 1.68$), $t(198) = 6.40, p < .001, d = 0.42$.

Subsequent analyses tested whether this self-perception bias was moderated by political ideology. Underestimation of liberalism was indexed by subtracting objective political orientation from self-perceived political orientation for each subject, with higher values indicating greater underestimation of liberalism (see Figure 1). Moderate, Average, and Conservative Republicans were combined in this analysis to maintain adequate sample size. Liberal Democrats significantly overestimated their liberalism ($t = 2.60, p = .02, d = 0.51$), and Average Democrats had relatively unbiased self-perceptions ($t = 0.48, p = .64, d = 0.07$). However, Moderate Democrats ($t = 4.00, p = .001, d = 0.83$), Independents ($t = 5.34, p < .001, d = 0.71$), and Republicans ($t = 5.71, p < .001, d = 0.87$) significantly underestimated their liberalism. These results suggest that underestimation of liberalism observed in the present study was driven largely by students who were relatively conservative.

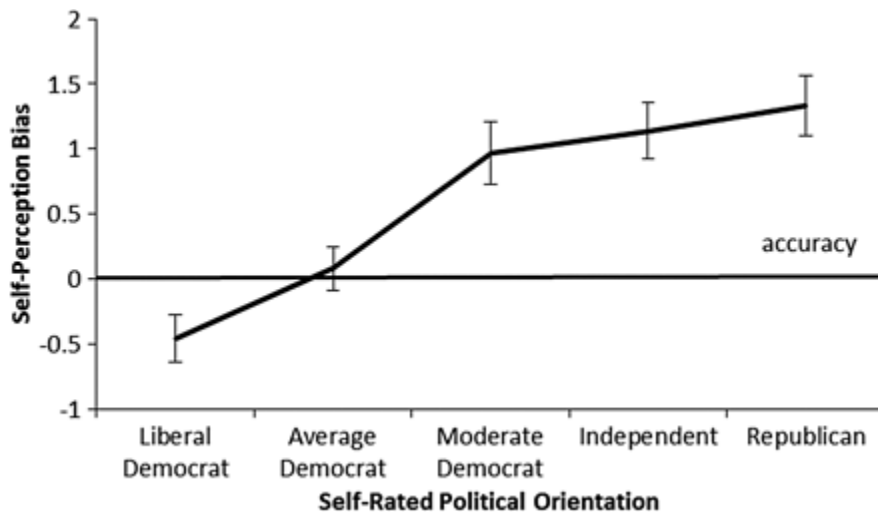


Figure 1. Mean difference between self-perceptions and objective scores as a function of political identity (Study 1). Higher values indicate greater underestimation of liberalism. Error bars are ± 1 standard error (SE).

A regression analysis was conducted to further explore whether political ideology moderated underestimation of liberalism. In preparation for analysis, self-perceived political orientation was coded as follows: 1 = Liberal Democrat, 2 = Average Democrat, 3 = Moderate Democrat, 4 = Independent, 5 = Republican. As anticipated, underestimation of liberalism was more pronounced among students who identified themselves as relatively high than low in political conservatism, $B = .46, SEB = .07, p < .001$.

Study 2

Study 1 provided evidence suggesting that young adults underestimate their liberalism, especially moderate and conservative young adults. However, the Study 1 sample consisted of college students at a single university. It is possible that the obtained findings were specific to the cultural climate of this university or the Southeastern United States. Therefore, Study 2 obtained a broader Internet sample to explore whether the Study 1 findings would replicate among a geographically diverse sample of young adults.

Method

An Internet survey was deployed using Amazon's Mechanical Turk (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011) on Wednesday September 12, 2012. The total sample included 360 respondents (233 female, 74% Caucasian, M age = 28.46). All participants were current residents of the United States, and respondents from 44 states were represented in the survey. Twenty-three participants were born outside the United States, but excluding these responses did not affect the observed pattern of results so they were retained.

As in Study 1, participants indicated their self-perceived political orientation and completed the 12-item objective measure of political orientation ($\alpha = .79$; see Table 1). The order of the political orientation measures (self-perceived vs. objective) was counterbalanced and subsequent analyses showed no effect of order on self-perception bias. Additionally, participants were asked to report their highest level of educational attainment and household income to explore whether these demographic variables moderated the predicted effects.

Results

There were no significant differences in self-perception bias as a function of age, gender, race, income, level of education, or region of residence (i.e., Northeast, South, Midwest, and West). Self-perceived and objective political orientation scores were significantly correlated ($r = .55$, $p < .001$). However, self-rated political orientation ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 1.54$) was significantly more conservative than objective political orientation ($M = 1.99$, $SD = 1.61$), $t(359) = 11.34$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.55$, thus replicating the effect obtained in Study 1.

Furthermore, self-perception bias was once again moderated by political ideology (see Figure 2). Although Liberal Democrats ($t = 2.61$, $p = .01$, $d = 0.26$) significantly overestimated their liberalism, Average Democrats ($t = 5.69$, $p < .01$, $d = 0.76$), Moderate Democrats ($t = 9.47$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.25$), Independents ($t = 9.12$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.90$), and Republicans ($t = 5.16$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.77$) significantly underestimated their liberalism. Additionally, results of a regression analysis showed that underestimation of liberalism was more pronounced among participants who identified themselves as relatively high than low in political conservatism, $B = .48$, $SEB = .05$, $p < .001$.

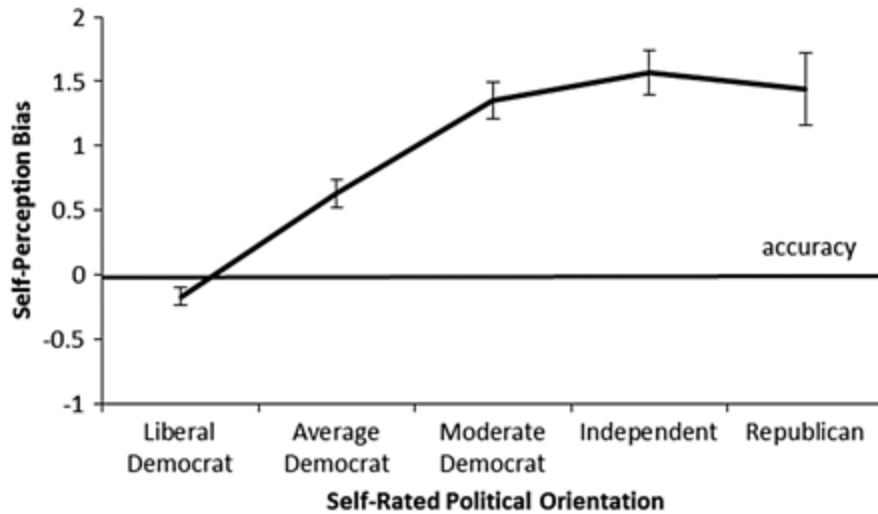


Figure 2. Mean difference between self-perceptions and objective scores as a function of political identity (Study 2).

Consistent with predictions, Studies 1 and 2 demonstrated that young adults underestimate their liberalism and that this effect is stronger among those who are relatively conservative. However, as is common in young adult populations (Gallup, 2012), the samples in these studies were mostly Democratic, with only a minority of participants identifying themselves as Republican. Thus, it remains less clear whether Republicans generally underestimate their liberalism and whether underestimation of liberalism obtains among Moderate, Average, and Conservative Republicans as separate groups. To address this concern, Study 3 obtained an equal number of participants within each of the seven political categories. This balanced design allowed us to explore whether underestimation of liberalism obtains across the entire range of the political spectrum.

Additionally, Study 3 explored whether biased self-perceptions of political orientation affected voting behavior in the 2012 Presidential Election. Past research suggests that single-item measures of political orientation predict voting intentions and behavior (Jost, 2006). Going further, we examined whether self-rated political orientation predicts voting even after controlling for political orientation scores derived from a more objective process. If obtained, this finding would provide preliminary evidence suggesting that biased perceptions of political orientation contaminate voting behavior.

Method

Data were collected from college students at a Southeastern and Mid-Atlantic university in the United States during January 2013. There were no significant differences in results across the two universities, so we collapsed across this factor. Screening was used to recruit an equal number of participants in each of the seven political categories. This resulted in a total sample of 154 participants (110 female, 66% Caucasian, 22% African American, M age = 20.31), with 22

participants in each political category (see Table 1). As in the prior studies, participants indicated their self-perceived political orientation and completed the 12-item objective measure of political orientation ($\alpha = .75$). Participants also indicated whether they voted for Barack Obama, Mitt Romney, another candidate, or did not vote during the 2012 Presidential election.

Results

There were no significant differences by age, gender, or race. Self-perceptions of political orientation were strongly correlated with objective scores ($r = .76, p < .001$). However, consistent with Studies 1 and 2, self-rated political orientation ($M = 4.00, SD = 2.01$) was significantly more conservative than objective political orientation scores ($M = 3.21, SD = 2.02$), $t(153) = 7.01, p < .001, d = 0.49$.

Further, results of a linear regression analysis showed that underestimation of liberalism was more pronounced among students who identified themselves as relatively high than low in political conservatism, $B = .23, SEB = .05, p < .001$ (see Figure 3). Specifically, Liberal Democrats ($t = 1.67, p = .11, d = 0.36$), Average Democrats ($t = 2.01, p = .06, d = 0.43$), and Moderate Democrats ($t = 1.64, p = .12, d = 0.35$) were not significantly biased. However, Independents ($t = 3.66, p = .001, d = 0.78$), Moderate Republicans ($t = 6.13, p < .001, d = 1.31$), Average Republicans ($t = 2.71, p = .01, d = 0.58$), and Conservative Republicans ($t = 3.93, p = .001, d = 0.84$) significantly underestimated their liberalism. Aggregating across the three Democratic ($n = 66$) and Republican ($n = 66$) groups, Democrats ($M = 0.18, SD = 1.63$) showed significantly less bias in self-perceptions than Republicans ($M = 1.24, SD = 1.43$), $t = 4.89, p < .001, d = 0.69$.²

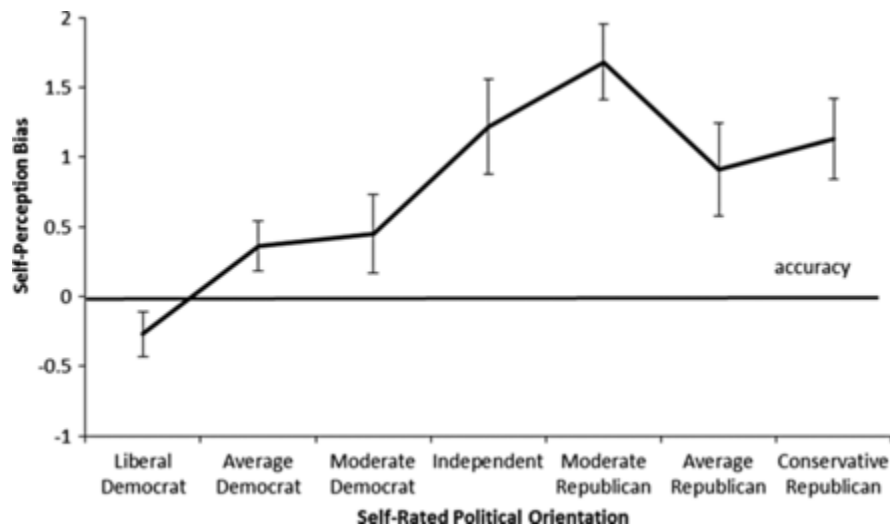


Figure 3. Mean difference between self-perceptions and objective scores as a function of political identity (Study 3).

Finally, in a logistic regression analysis, we predicted voting from self-perceived and objective political orientation. Voting for Obama and Romney were analyzed separately by creating dummy-coded variables that categorized voting for the target candidate as 1, and voting for the other candidate, a third party, or not voting as 0. Both self-reported ($B = -.65$, $SEB = .16$, $p < .001$) and objective political orientation ($B = -.38$, $SEB = .16$, $p = .02$) significantly predicted voting for Obama. Similarly, both self-reported ($B = .81$, $SEB = .24$, $p = .001$) and objective political orientation ($B = .61$, $SEB = .20$, $p = .002$) significantly predicted voting for Romney. Thus, self-perceptions of political orientation, which contain a significant degree of bias, predict voting behavior even after controlling for political orientation scores derived from a more objective process.³

Discussion

Three studies examined whether people have biased perceptions of their political orientation. It was anticipated that people would underestimate their liberalism and that this effect would be more pronounced among conservative than liberal respondents. Obtained results were consistent with these hypotheses. That is, self-reported political orientation was significantly more conservative than political orientation scores assigned to subjects using a more objective process. Furthermore, underestimation of liberalism was consistently larger among participants who were relatively conservative than liberal. Finally, biased self-perceptions predicted voting behavior in the 2012 Presidential Election even after controlling for objective political orientation scores.

Previous research indicates that self-evaluations of competence and personality are susceptible to various biases (Dunning et al., 2004; Vazire & Carlson, 2011). In each of the studies reported here, self-evaluations of political orientation and objective political orientation scores were substantially correlated, suggesting that people have relatively accurate perceptions of their political orientation. However, mean-difference analyses demonstrated a systematic bias toward underestimation of liberalism. Further, because conservatives evidence higher levels of in-group loyalty and self-enhancement than liberals (Graham et al., 2013; Jost et al., 2010), we presumed that conservatives might identify more strongly with political in-groups, and come to see themselves as more prototypical members of such groups than liberals. Consistent with this perspective, underestimation of liberalism was more pronounced among participants who were relatively conservative. Thus, relevant motives may lead people to perceive themselves in an overly conservative manner much as they lead people to perceive themselves in an overly favorable manner (Guenther & Alicke, 2010; Sedikides & Gregg, 2008).

Beyond these basic contributions to self-knowledge research, our findings also have practical implications for the political process. Self-perceptions of political orientation strongly predict support for Presidential candidates who have the same orientation (Jost, 2006). However, underestimation of liberalism may lead some young adults to mistakenly vote for candidates who contradict their political views. Furthermore, during voter registration, most states require residents to identify themselves as Democratic, Republican, or Independent. This selection

determines whether residents vote in the Democratic or Republican primary election. Our findings suggest that self-perceptions of political affiliation may be significantly biased, leading young adults to potentially place themselves into primary elections for which they are ill matched.

In addition, our findings have implications for the measurement of political orientation. Research typically uses a single-item, explicit measure of political party identification (e.g., Jost, 2006; Stimson, 2004). While we might not suggest eliminating this valuable tool for measuring political affiliation, the current findings suggest that biases may contaminate such judgments. It is advised that future research use more objective measures of political orientation to cluster respondents into groups. The political party quiz used in the present report represents a convenient, low-resource alternative to explicit ratings of political party. Reaction time (Hawkins & Nosek, 2012) and neurocognitive measures of liberalism/conservatism (Amodio, Jost, Master, & Yee, 2007) may also represent fruitful but less convenient alternatives to explicit measures.

A limitation of the present research was the use of nonrepresentative samples of college students and Internet respondents. Nonetheless, the present findings are consistent with results obtained from representative samples showing that self-perceptions of political identity often conflict with people's attitudes on specific issues (Free & Cantrill, 1967; Stimson, 2004). Further, our results show that young adults underestimate how liberal their political attitudes are relative to the political attitudes of the general population. Because young adults comprise a significant portion of the general population, there must be another group that, as compensation, overestimates their liberalism. One possibility is that age moderates biases in self-perceptions of political orientation. Indeed, there are pronounced generational changes in people's views on several political issues, such as gay marriage and immigration (Pew Research Center, 2011). Young adults who consider themselves conservative might espouse relatively liberal attitudes on issues in which there are generational changes (i.e., support gay marriage and immigration). Alternatively, older adults who consider themselves liberal might espouse relatively conservative attitudes on issues in which there are generational changes (i.e., oppose gay marriage and immigration). Therefore, whereas young adults underestimate their liberalism, older adults might overestimate their liberalism. Future research is needed to directly test this possibility.

Another limitation of the current study was that we categorized self-perceived and objective political orientation along a left–right continuum ranging from Liberal Democrat to Conservative Republican, but some people's political attitudes cannot be captured by this continuum. For example, some people consider themselves economic conservatives but social liberals (e.g., Libertarians), whereas others consider themselves social conservatives but economic liberals. Although refinement is needed to better account for the diversity of political views present in American society, the majority of the American public readily places themselves along the traditional left–right continuum (see Jost, 2006; Stimson, 2004). Additionally, social and economic attitudes are significantly correlated (Jost et al., 2009). Thus, underestimation of

liberalism likely occurs for both social and economic attitudes, but future study is needed to directly test this possibility.

Finally, we argue that in-group loyalty leads people to underestimate their liberalism. An alternative explanation for our findings is that young adults may evaluate their political orientation by focusing on how liberal they are in comparison to other young people they know and interact with on a regular basis. Because most young adults are relatively liberal, this may lead them to underestimate how liberal they are in comparison to the general population. However, findings obtained in the present studies are inconsistent with this hypothesis. If comparisons with liberal reference groups produced underestimation of liberalism, one would expect the effect to be constant across the political spectrum. By contrast, underestimation of liberalism was larger among conservatives than liberals, and staunch liberals typically overestimated their liberalism. Thus, our findings are better explained by moral foundations theory (Haidt & Graham, 2007), which predicts underestimation of liberalism should be more pronounced for those on the political right than left.

In sum, the present research identified a systematic bias among young adults to perceive themselves as somewhat more conservative than they actually are. Future studies are needed to further explore when and why people underestimate their liberalism in addition to the implications of these findings for voting behavior and political discourse in America more generally. Based on self-reports of political orientation, commentators have presumed that America is a “center-right” nation (see Klein, 2010). The present findings challenge this assumption and signal a call for additional research exploring the validity of self-perceptions in the political realm.

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Appendix

The Political Party Quiz

The specific statements used in the political party quiz were the following: (1) There need to be stricter laws and regulations to protect the environment; (2) The government should help more needy people even if it means going deeper into debt; (3) The growing number of newcomers from other countries threaten traditional American customs and values; (4) I never doubt the existence of God; (5) Business corporations make too much profit; (6) Gays and lesbians should be allowed to marry legally; (7) The government needs to do more to make health care affordable and accessible; (8) One parent can bring up a child as well as two parents together; (9) Government regulation of business usually does more harm than good; (10) Abortion should be

illegal in all or most cases; (11) Labor unions are necessary to protect the working person; (12) Poor people have become too dependent on government assistance programs. Responses were made on a 4-point scale with the following anchors: completely agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, and completely disagree. Agreement with Items 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 11 were coded as liberal responses; agreement with Items 3, 4, 9, 10, and 12 were coded as conservative responses.

Responses to each question were coded from -2 (most liberal position) to $+2$ (most conservative position). Then, responses were weighted by the correlation of the item with political party identification, derived from a representative sample of registered American voters (see Pew Research Center, 2012). The coefficients were as follows: Item 1 = .56, Item 2 = .51, Item 3 = .26, Item 4 = .24, Item 5 = .32, Item 6 = .43, Item 7 = .47, Item 8 = .28, Item 9 = .45, Item 10 = .45, Item 11 = .46, and Item 12 = .47. Weighted values were summed across the 12 items. Summed values were centered on the score of the average registered voter. Because the theoretical range of the scale is much wider than the actual distribution of the American public, extreme scores were compressed using a logarithmic function.

Cutoff points were determined using average scores derived from the representative sample. The average score for each political group in the representative sample was as follows: Liberal Democrat = -4.05 , Average Democrat = -2.75 , Moderate Democrat = -1.80 , Independent = 0.09 , Moderate Republican = 1.12 , Average Republican = 3.29 , and Conservative Republican = 4.11 . Participants were placed into the political category whose mean score was closest in value to their overall score on the quiz. Summary scores below -3.40 were coded as Liberal Democrat. Scores between -2.30 and -3.40 were coded as Average Democrat. Scores between -2.30 and -0.86 were coded as Moderate Democrat. Scores between -0.86 and 0.61 were coded as Independent. Scores between 0.61 and 2.21 were coded as Moderate Republican. Scores between 2.21 and 3.70 were coded as Average Republican. Finally, scores above 3.70 were coded as Conservative Republican.

Article Notes

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Notes

1 Desires for in-group loyalty may also influence political attitudes (Cohen, 2003). However, specific attitudes within major political parties can be highly variable, ambiguous, and subject to change over time. For this reason, desires for in-group loyalty should have a greater influence on general perceptions of political identity than specific political attitudes.

2 The critical outcome variable subtracted objective scores from self-perceptions. Using this approach, conservatives were more likely than liberals to underestimate their liberalism because conservative responses occupied higher values on response scales. To address this concern, we conducted supplemental analyses where self-perception bias was defined by the absolute difference between self-perceptions and objective scores. Consistent with our primary analyses, the absolute difference was significantly different from 0 in Study 1 ($M = 1.24$, $SD = 1.27$, $t = 16.30$, $p < .001$), Study 2 ($M = 1.24$, $SD = 1.20$, $t = 19.61$, $p < .001$), and Study 3 ($M = 1.16$, $SD = 1.09$, $t = 13.19$, $p < .001$), suggesting that participants had biased self-perceptions of political orientation. Further, linear regression analyses showed that the absolute difference between self-perceptions and objective scores was significantly larger among conservative than liberal respondents in Study 1 ($B = .24$, $SEB = .05$, $p < .001$), Study 2 ($B = .44$, $SEB = .03$, $p < .001$), and Study 3 ($B = .15$, $SEB = .04$, $p = .001$). Therefore, findings obtained in the primary analyses are not simply an artifact of the metric used to calculate self-perception bias, as they replicated even when bias was measured using absolute difference scores.

3 There were no participants in Study 3 who identified themselves as Democratic when their objective scores suggested they were Republican. However, there were 19 participants who identified themselves as Republican when their objective scores suggested they were Democratic. Of these participants, six voted for Obama, five for Romney, one for another candidate, and seven did not vote. These findings must be interpreted with caution due to low sample size, but they suggest that people who misclassify themselves as Republican may on occasion vote for a Republican candidate when their views actually align more closely with the Democratic Party.

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