RUNNING HEAD: The expanse of empathy

Ideological Differences in the Expanse of Empathy

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The American political landscape of the 21st century has largely been characterized by culture wars between liberals and conservatives. On policy issues as diverse as economic regulation, defense spending, abortion, marriage equality, and health care, ideological differences have become increasingly pronounced, as reflected in political legislation, public opinion, and news coverage. The 112th Congress, which governed from January 2011 through January 2013, is on record as the most ideologically polarized Congress ever (Carroll, Lewis, Lo, McCarty, Poole, & Rosenthal, 2013). Eight of the most ideologically divided years (as measured by presidential approval rating gaps between Democrats and Republicans) have occurred since 2004, making George W. Bush and Barack Obama the most polarizing presidents ever (Jones, 2013). This polarization is also evident in the political press that documents and spurs on this phenomenon, with media bias and media partisanship also approaching record levels (Groeling, 2013). One clear meme that exacerbates these divisions is the perceived "Empathy Gap," whereby liberals are seen as more caring (Davis, Smith, & Marsden, 2007; Iyer, Koleva, Ditto, & Haidt, 2012; Krauthammer, 2012; McCue & Gopoian, 2000), even as conservatives are equally generous with their time and money (Brooks, 2007).

As disagreement between left-wing individuals and right-wing individuals has grown, so too has psychological research attempting to document and explain this disagreement. A cursory search for the term "political psychology" in Google Scholar reveals 9,370 entries from 1900-2000, a figure that has more than doubled in just the first 14 years of the 21st century. Much of recent political psychology has indeed focused on explaining ideological differences in terms of cognition, perception, motivation,

behavior, and psychological ability (see Jost, Federico, & Napier, 2009, and Stone et al., in press, for reviews). In line with this tradition of research, we suggest in this chapter that empathy, "other-oriented emotion elicited by and congruent with the perceived welfare of someone in need" (Batson, 2011, p. 11), is a primary factor that distinguishes liberals and conservatives. In a recent study of people's moral stereotypes about liberals and conservatives (comparing perceived to actual moral stances across a wide range of moral concerns), it was found that "the largest inaccuracies were in liberals' underestimations of conservatives' harm and fairness concerns, and liberals further exaggerated the political differences by overestimating their own such concerns" (Graham, Nosek, & Haidt, 2012, p. e50092). Although participants across the political spectrum (especially liberals) tended to stereotype conservatives as being relatively lacking in empathy with some evidence (described below) supporting this perception, we propose that liberals and conservatives do not differ in their capacity for empathy or willingness to empathize with others. Rather, the present research suggests that liberals and conservatives differ in terms of the *targets* toward whom they expend their empathy, with liberals expressing empathy to a greater degree toward larger social circles and conservatives expressing empathy toward smaller circles.

We begin by describing what is known about the relationship between ideology and empathy. We then summarize existing research on other psychological differences between liberals and conservatives that provide support for our existing hypotheses. Next, we describe preliminary studies testing these hypotheses, and provide suggestions for how our studies can inform work on political conflict.

Empathy and Ideology

Popular media representations of liberals and conservatives tend to depict liberals (and, by proxy, Democrats) as the far more empathic group of people. The term "bleeding heart liberal" commonly refers to individuals with liberal political leanings, and signifies the belief that liberals tend to sympathize excessively with the plight of the poor, the underprivileged, and others in need. Former Democratic president Bill Clinton epitomized this stereotype when he famously uttered, "I feel your pain" in 1992 (in fact Clinton made this remark angrily in the midst of a heated debate about the AIDS crisis). In 2006, the Democratic presidential candidate Barack Obama bemoaned the nation's "empathy deficit" in a commencement speech at Northwestern University.

Beyond anecdotal evidence, some empirical evidence also suggests that liberals are more empathic than conservatives. One piece of evidence for this comes from the General Social Survey (GSS; see Davis, Smith, & Marsden, 2007) a large-scale nationally representative survey of U.S. households collected by the National Opinion Research Center. From 2002 to 2004, the GSS administered a 7-item empathy scale that measured general empathy toward others (Davis, 1994; e.g., "I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person") in conjunction with numerous questions about support for various policies. Scores on this measure were positively related with support for policies that are typically supported by political liberals, including increased government spending for health care, Blacks, children, social security, welfare, and the poor, increased government efforts to help the poor, the sick, the elderly, and Blacks, increased efforts toward reducing wealth income inequality, and increased government action in general. These results suggest that individuals who endorse politically liberal policies are

also those who report experiencing more empathy. Other empirical research that has employed measures of general empathy and measures of political ideology also shows that liberalism is correlated with self-reported empathy (Iyer et al., 2012; McCue & Gopoian, 2001).

Empirical research has also examined the association between empathic concern and social dominance orientation (SDO), an individual difference variable that reflects the endorsement of social hierarchy and that is also typically associated with political conservatism (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 2001). Numerous studies have confirmed that self-reported empathy and SDO are negatively associated with each other (Bäckström & Björklund, 2007; Sidanius, Kteily, Sheehy-Skeffington, Ho, Sibley, & Duriez, 2013; McFarland, 2010) and some research suggests that SDO is negatively associated with brain activity in regions associated with empathy (Cheon, Mathur, Harada, & Lipke, 2009). Thus, the preference for social hierarchy, a key component of conservative ideology, has clearly been linked to lower empathy in general.

One additional domain of research that provides evidence for a relationship between empathy and political ideology is research employing life narrative interviews. In a study of liberal and conservative Christians (McAdams, Albaugh, Farber, Daniels, Logan, & Olson, 2008), participants were interviewed about major life events and their interviews were coded for various psychological themes. The life narratives of political conservatives tended to center on authority figures, moral rules, and self-discipline, whereas the life narratives of political liberals tended to center on nurturance, openness, and empathy. Liberals were more likely than conservatives to display the ability to sympathize with another individual's emotional state. Similarly, research on adolescents

who describe themselves as liberal or conservative shows that liberals tend to describe themselves in more sympathetic terms (Eisenberg-Berg & Mussen, 1978). Consistent with work on self-reported empathy, this type of research suggests that liberals possess greater general empathy than conservatives.

Although the research on political ideology and empathy suggests differences in absolute empathy between liberals and conservatives, this research is not fully conclusive, as the vast majority of studies appear to assess empathy at a general level rather than empathy toward specific targets. We suggest the possibility that rather than liberals and conservatives differing in terms of the degree of empathy they possess, they instead differ in terms of the targets of that empathy. We next review existing evidence from a variety of research programs suggesting that liberals and conservatives expend their empathy toward more global and local targets, respectively. That is, liberals tend to empathize with larger, farther, less structured, and more encompassing social circles whereas conservatives tend to empathize with smaller, closer, more well-defined, and less encompassing social circles.

Cognitive-Motivational Styles

A broad program of research has suggested that differences in political stances between liberals and conservatives may stem from differences in more basic cognitive-motivational styles. A landmark article by Jost, Glaser, Kruglanski, and Sulloway (2003) reviewed evidence suggesting that conservatives exhibit a higher need for closure, order, and structure, a greater intolerance for ambiguity, and lower integrative complexity than liberals. This meta-analysis revealed that political conservatism might reflect stable

individual differences in the tendency to seek safety, structure, and stability, to view ambiguity or changes to the status quo as threatening, and to exhibit closed-mindedness toward novelty. Political liberalism, on the other hand, thus reflected a greater comfort with lack of structure, greater openness to new experiences, and a stronger tendency to seek out novel situations.

These different cognitive-motivational profiles translate into different ways of viewing the social world as well. For example, high levels of intolerance to change, novelty, and instability contribute to group-centrism, a pattern behavior that manifests in high levels of adherence to group norms, in-group preference, rejection of individuals who deviate from the group, and resistance to change within the group (Kruglanski, Pierro, Mannetti, & De Grada, 2006). Thus, based on these cognitive-motivational differences among liberals and conservatives, we would predict that the expression of empathy would follow a similar pattern. Conservatives, in their tendencies toward closure, order, and stability should expend empathy toward smaller, more well-defined, and less permeable social circles. Liberals, in their tendencies toward openness, tolerance for ambiguity, and desire for change should seek larger, less well-defined, and more permeable social circles.

Personality Traits

Research on the dominant personality traits of liberals and conservatives reveals a very similar pattern to the work on cognitive and motivational styles. A series of studies has revealed consistent findings on how "Big Five" personality traits map on to ideological positions, showing that liberals score higher on openness whereas

conservatives score higher on conscientiousness (Carney, Jost, Gosling, & Potter, 2008; Goldberg & Rosolack, 1994; Jost, 2006; Rentfrow, Jost, Gosling, & Potter, 2009). Again, these findings suggest a greater willingness among liberals to extend empathy outward whereas the vigilance associated with conservativism suggests a greater tendency to extend empathy only towards one's inner social circle. More recent work has examined agreeableness among liberals and conservatives, showing that both liberals and conservatives exhibit this trait, but in different ways (Hirsh, De Young, Xu, & Peterson, 2010). Compassion, as one component of agreeableness, was more associated with liberalism, whereas politeness, as a separate component of agreeableness, was more associated with conservatism. This pattern of results suggests a similar dichotomy in suggesting that conservatives are more concerned with maintaining the social order through traditional rules and norms whereas liberals seem interested in compassion more broadly.

Motivational Orientations

Additional work suggesting ideological differences in the expanse of empathy concerns motivational orientations, specifically distinguishing between approach and avoidance motivation and between promotion and prevention focus. Regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 1998, 2000) suggests that people engage in self-regulatory maintenance through satisfying nurturance needs (the attainment of aspirations) or through safety needs (the attainment of security), and people differ in how much they focused on these two classes of needs. Focusing on satisfying nurturance needs constitutes a promotion focus, whereas focusing on satisfying security needs constitutes a

prevention focus. People can be chronically high in prevention focus only, promotion focus only, or be high or low in both. Studies that have examined the association between ideology and regulatory focus have established consistent patterns between these constructs in that conservatism tends to be linked to a prevention focus, whereas liberalism tends to be linked to a promotion focus.

One set of studies demonstrated that individuals who either scored higher on prevention focus or who were experimentally induced to experience a prevention focus made more conservative choices about economic reform (Boldero & Higgins, 2011). Additional work has shown that a chronic or temporarily induced prevention focus is associated with an increased endorsement of moral values (e.g., loyalty, authority) typically associated with conservative ideology, whereas promotion focus is associated with an increased endorsement of moral values (e.g., harm, fairness) typically associated with liberal ideology (Cornwell & Higgins, 2013, 2014).

Related to this work, a recent model of morality has emerged that characterizes moral concerns across the political divide by similarly focusing on distinct motivational orientations. This model, the moral motives model (Janoff-Bulman & Carnes, 2013; see also Janoff-Bulman, this volume), suggests that orientations toward approach and avoidance (or inhibition; Carver, 2006), akin to promotion and prevention focus, produce different moral concerns toward the self, others, and groups. According to this model, the approach orientation produces moral concerns for industriousness, helping and fairness, and social justice and communal responsibility whereas the avoidance orientation produces moral concerns for self-restraint and moderation, refraining from harming others, and social order and communal solidarity. The moral concerns associated with

approach orientation are more central to liberal ideology, whereas the moral concerns associated with avoidance orientation are more central to conservative ideology, consistent with previous work has suggested that liberalism is based in approach motivation whereas conservatism is based in avoidance orientation (Janoff-Bulman, 2009; Janoff-Bulman, Sheikh, & Baldacci, 2008).

The sum of these studies on motivation suggests that conservatism is associated with motivational orientations toward preserving safety, security, and the status quo. Liberalism, on the other hand, is associated with motivational orientations toward seeking rewards and positive outcomes. When applied to empathic concern toward others, a pattern again emerges whereby conservatives tend to emphasize the importance of maintaining the security associated with group solidarity and loyalty whereas liberals focus on applying principles of justice more broadly. This pattern is again consistent with the idea that conservatives and liberals tend to prioritize smaller versus larger social circles, respectively.

Moral Foundations

Another prominent theory of morality as applied to political ideology is Moral Foundations Theory (Graham et al., 2013; Haidt & Joseph, 2004; Haidt & Graham, 2007), which characterizes liberals as and conservatives as diverging along two classes of intuitive moral values: individualizing values and binding values. Individualizing values primarily focus on individual people, specifically concerns about the rights of individuals to be treated fairly (fairness/cheating) and protected from harm (care/harm). Binding values primarily focus on groups and institutions, and include concerns about support for

one's ingroup (loyalty/betrayal), concerns about respect for authority and tradition (authority/subversion), and concerns for acting in a sacred and pure manner (purity/degradation). Extensive research now demonstrates that although both liberals and conservatives endorse these values, liberals prioritize individualizing values over binding values to a greater extent than do conservatives (Graham, Haidt, & Nosek, 2009; Graham, Nosek, Haidt, Iyer, Koleva, & Ditto, 2011). Across this research, liberals express more endorsement of statements that reflect concerns about harm and fairness (e.g., "It can never be right to kill a human being"), are less willing to compromise these values for money, and use rhetoric that reflects these values. Conservatives, on the other hand, show greater endorsement (relative to liberals) of statements that concern loyalty, authority, and purity (e.g., "It is more important to be a team player than to express oneself"), are less willing to compromise these values for money, and use rhetoric that reflects these binding values (Graham et al., 2009; Graham et al., 2011). In line with the other research on ideology we have described, the work on moral foundations suggest that conservatives are more concerned with maintaining the structure, closeness, and order of their social ingroups, whereas liberals are concerned with the well-being of individuals more broadly.

Summary of Existing Research

Across numerous lines of research, the cognitive-motivational styles, personality traits, motivational orientations, and moral foundations of liberals and conservatives reveal a consistent pattern in how liberals and conservatives generally express empathy. Liberals tend to express their empathy outward toward broader circles of individuals

whereas conservatives tend to express their empathy inward, toward smaller and more well-defined social circles. Interestingly, this pattern appears even in programs of research that have traditionally been at odds with each other—Jost and colleagues' (2003) conceptualization of political conservatism, for example, has conflicted with conceptualizations from Moral Foundations Theory (Jost, 2012), yet both models provide a view of conservatives as more oriented toward smaller, defined groups with defined structures. Both of these models also suggest that liberals to be more concerned with openness to a greater diversity of social practices and less concerned with strict group boundaries.

Empirical Investigation of Ideological Differences in the Expanse of Empathy

  Despite the consistent pattern that appears to emerge across many lines of research, no research to our knowledge has explicitly tested the idea that liberals and conservatives expend empathy toward larger versus smaller social circles, respectively. Furthermore, no research has tested the counterpoint to the prevailing conventional wisdom that liberals possess and express *more* empathy than conservatives. We conducted a series of studies to test these hypotheses (Waytz, Iyer, Young, & Graham, 2014). Across these studies, we asked people to indicate their political ideology and to answer questions measuring empathy and related constructs (such as moral concern, compassion, love, and identification) toward relatively smaller or larger social circles: family versus friends, the nation vs. the world, and humans vs. nonhumans (e.g., plants and animals). Across these studies, we found that conservatives tend to express their

empathy toward family (versus friends), the nation (vs. the world), and humans (vs. nonhumans), whereas liberals showed the opposite pattern, preferring the larger groups.

As an initial test of whether liberals and conservatives differ in their distribution of empathy to larger versus smaller social circles, we experimentally tested whether people with different self-reported ideologies would report being empathic toward their friends vs. their family members. In all studies, participants completed items online and indicated their political ideology on a 7-point scale from *very liberal* to *very conservative* (with additional options for libertarian, don't know/not political, and other, which we excluded). In this study, participants also completed the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI; Davis, 1980), a measure that contains a subscale of empathic concern. Critically, we modified this empathic concern subscale to create three conditions to which participants were randomly assigned. In the baseline condition, participants completed the IRI in its normal format. In the *friends-oriented* condition, the questions that pertained to the empathic concern subscale were altered to be directed toward one's friends (e.g., "I often have tender, concerned feelings for people who are less fortunate than me" was changed to "I often have tender, concerned feelings for my friends who are less fortunate than me"). In the *family-oriented* condition, the questions in the empathic concern subscale were altered to be directed toward one's family, in a similar manner.

Consistent with prior studies, in the control condition, liberals reported more empathic concern than conservatives. Similarly, when the moral circle was expanded to one's friends, liberalism remained significantly associated with greater empathic concern. However, when the moral circle was restricted to one's family, ideology and empathic concern did not correlate significantly, suggesting for the first time that liberalism does

not correspond to greater empathy across the board. These findings suggest that liberalism is associated with a greater tendency to extend empathy to people beyond one's family, whereas conservatism is not. However, this study does not definitively indicate whether conservatism is related to a more constricted sense of empathic concern or lower empathic concern overall (as suggested by the relationship between ideology and empathic concern in the control condition). We thus conducted a subsequent study to adjudicate between these two possibilities by employing a measure that captures love of family versus love of nonfamily specifically, and by assessing moral universalism and identification with all humanity.

Study 2 involved participants completing the love of humanity scale (Campos, Keltner, & Gonzaga, 2002), a measure that assesses four types of love: romantic love, love for friends, love for family, and love for all humanity (beyond friends and family). Ideology was unrelated to romantic love (a construct that lies somewhere in between friendship and family relations, as in marriage), but was significantly related to love of family and love of friends, such that liberals reported more love of friends than conservatives but conservatives reported more love of family than liberals. This relationship is consistent with Study 1, suggesting that liberals extend their moral circle to friends whereas conservatives constrain their moral circle to the family. Of additional importance, liberal ideology was significantly correlated with love for all others, suggesting that liberalism is related toward a universal sense of compassion.

To build upon the finding that liberalism is related to a universal sense of compassion, Study 3 asked participants to complete the Schwartz Values Inventory (Schwartz, 1992), which measures various values including universalism, the concept of

peace and equality for all. Conservative ideology was negatively correlated with universalism, again demonstrating that conservatism is negatively related to a universal love of others, whereas liberalism is positively related to this sense of universal compassion.

Although Studies 2-3 suggest liberalism correlates with empathy toward the world at large, and is consistent with the idea that liberals express empathy toward larger social circles, these studies do not explicitly compare empathy toward the world at large versus a smaller circle. Therefore, we conducted Study 4 to compare liberals' and conservatives' respective willingness to empathize with their nation versus all humanity. In Study 4, participants completed the Identification With All Humanity Scale (IWAHS; McFarland & Brown, 2008), which assesses how much people identify with their community, their country, and the world as a whole.

Political conservatism showed a small but significant correlation with identification with community and a more sizeable correlation with identification with country. Furthermore, liberalism correlated significantly with identification with the world as a whole. These findings demonstrate that whereas liberals identify with others in a more global sense, conservatives identify with others in a more local sense.

Studies 1-4 show that liberals and conservatives appear to differ in terms of the tendency to include socially dissimilar and distant others in their moral circles. This manifests at the level of family versus friends and nation versus world. These differences are unsurprising given the culture-war debates and well-known policy disagreements on issues that affect these specific circles of family, community, nation, and world (Graham et al., 2009; Hunter, 1991; Koleva et al., 2012).

Given these established differences, it is therefore possible that this difference in moral inclusion and exclusion extends to entities outside the boundaries of humanity, with liberals more likely to include nonhumans—animals, nature, and other entities—in their moral circles and conservatives more likely to restrict their moral circles to humans. To test whether this difference in moral circle size extends beyond humanity, we conducted subsequent studies to examine the relationship between political ideology and perceptions of nonhumans as capable of mental states such as feelings and consciousness.

In Study 5, we tested whether this relationship between ideology and moral concern for nonhumans manifests itself in anthropomorphism of nature, animals, and even technology. Anthropomorphism, the attribution of humanlike mental states to nonhumans (Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007), is the basis for moral concern of nonhuman entities. Numerous studies now show that the more people attribute emotions to animals, nature, and technology, the less inclined they are to harm these entities (Bastian, Loughnan, Haslam, & Radke, 2011; Gray, Gray, & Wegner, 2007; Waytz, Cacioppo, & Epley, 2010). If conservative ideology (compared to liberal ideology) is linked to less inclusion of nonhumans in one's moral circle, then conservatives should be less likely to anthropomorphize than liberals.

Study 5 asked participants to complete the Individual Differences in Anthropomorphism Questionnaire (IDAQ; Waytz, Cacioppo, & Epley, 2010) and found that political conservatism was significantly and negatively correlated with anthropomorphism. These results suggest that ideology corresponds to the consideration of various nonhuman entities as humanlike. Given the relationship between humanization and moral concern (Waytz et al., 2010), we expected that this difference in

anthropomorphism should manifest in a difference in moral concern as well. Our next step was to test the hypothesis that liberals are more likely to extend their moral circle to include nonhumans, whereas conservatives are more likely to restrict their moral circles to humans.

Importantly, although we have shown that liberals express greater moral concern for all humanity, our overarching prediction suggests that this expression is context-specific. That is, when all humanity represents a large circle (such as in comparison to one's nation), then liberals should show more (conservatives should show less) empathy toward humanity, but when humanity represents a smaller circle (such as in comparison to all living things), liberals should show less (conservatives should show more) empathy toward humanity. Study 6 examines this hypothesis directly.

In Study 6, participants completed a moral allocation task, in which they allocated 100 "moral units" (described as units representing the capacity for moral, prosocial, and generous behavior) among the following 16 categories. Eight of these categories comprised circles pertaining to humans only: immediately family; extended family; closest friends; distant friends; acquaintances; all people you have met; all people in your country; all people on your continent; all people in the world. Eight of these categories included nonhumans: all mammals; all amphibians, reptiles, mammals, fish, and birds; all animals including paramecia and amoebae; all animals in the universe, including alien lifeforms; all living things including plants and trees; all natural things in the universe including inert entities such as rocks, and all things in existence. We summed up scores for both categories to measure moral allocation to humans and nonhumans.

Participants completed two randomly ordered iterations of this task. In one, they were asked to allocate moral units how one should *ideally* divide them. In the other, they were asked to divide them as they *personally* do so in their daily lives. In addition, participants also completed a more general measure of the extent of their moral circle by clicking on rungs extending outward and representing the same categories as in the moral allocation task (see Appendix A). This measure allowed us to create heatmaps to visualize the relative sizes of liberals' and conservatives' moral circles.

Political conservatism was significantly correlated with both personal moral allocation to humans only, and ideal moral allocation to humans only. In addition, the more liberal people were, the more they allocated equally to humans and nonhumans (in both their personal and ideal allocations). The more conservative people were, the more likely they were to prioritize moral concern for humans versus nonhumans. Finally, we assessed the heatmaps generated by participants' clicks on the rung they felt best represented the extent of their moral circle. These heatmaps also demonstrated that liberals were most likely to select an outer rung whereas conservatives were most likely to select an inner rung (see Figure 1). Overall, these results demonstrate that political conservatism is linked to a more enclosed moral circle that is exclusive to human beings and not to other animals or lifeforms. Liberal ideology is linked to a moral circle that includes nonhumans (and even aliens and rocks) as well. Study 6 also showed that the same differences emerge when asking about participants' ideal moral circles – that is, how big they think their moral circles *should* be, not necessarily how big they are. This suggests that liberals and conservatives, while having different sizes and patterns of

allocations in their moral circles, both feel that their pattern is the right way to adjudicate moral concern in the world.

Of course, one major caveat to the interpretation of Study 6 is that we constrained the number of utiles that participants could assign to teach group, in effect forcing empathy to be zero-sum. To examine whether a similar pattern would emerge without this constraint, we conducted a final study, Study 7. In this study, participants completed the same personal moral allocation task as in Study 6, with one alteration: they were told that they could allocate any amount to any group, and any total amount overall.

Most important, we found no significant correlation between political ideology and absolute moral utiles allocated, consistent with the idea that liberals and conservatives do not differ in overall empathy when the targets of empathy are closely specified. Also, as in Study 6, conservatism was positively and significantly correlated with the percentage of moral utiles allocated toward humans, whereas liberalism was positively and significantly correlated with the percentage of moral utile allocation to nonhumans. Thus, even when participants are not constrained in their allocations (and when more allocations to nonhumans does not require less allocations to humans), the same pattern emerges such that liberals distribute empathy toward broader circles and conservatives distribute empathy toward smaller circles.

Seven studies show that across a variety of measures, liberals (relative to conservatives) empathize with friends compared to family, the world as a whole compared to the nation, and nonhumans compared to humans (see Figure 2 for a summary of findings). Conservatives show the opposite pattern of results, again

demonstrating that ideological differences do not correspond to differences in absolute levels of empathy, but rather correspond to differences in the *targets* of empathy.

Implications and Future Directions

The present work has implications for understanding political conflict and bridging the ideological divide. First and foremost, the recognition that liberals and conservatives both experience empathy, albeit toward different social targets, can enable political debates to be framed in terms of love rather than hate. Typically in intergroup conflict, people expect that outgroup members' engagement in conflict is a product of dislike and animosity rather than positivity (Frey & Tropp, 2006; Kramer & Messick, 1998; Krueger, 1996), and people attribute negative outgroup behaviors to stable enduring characteristics (Pettigrew, 1979). Furthermore, liberals and conservatives in particular exaggerate each other's ideological extremity (Chambers & Melnyk, 2006; Graham, Nosek, & Haidt, 2012) and tend to view each other in negative terms (Krugman, 2007; Leo, 2002). These sort of pessimistic views toward outgroups can exacerbate intergroup conflict (Frey & Tropp, 2006), but recognition that political opponents are motivated by similar psychological experiences (i.e. empathy) might allow for increased opportunities for reconciliation.

In addition to generally reframing the broad conflict between liberals and conservatives in positive rather than negative terms, the present research also allows for specific policy debates central to this conflict to be construed in terms of empathy. For example, debate over immigration reform can be seen as a debate that pits strict empathy for U.S. citizens against empathy for individuals born outside the United States. Debate

over diplomacy versus military deterrence strategies toward ostensible enemy countries can be seen as a debate toward empathy toward foreign countries versus empathy toward one's own country and a desire to protect it at all costs. Even debates over global warming can be construed in terms of a moral concern toward the environment versus a strict caring for humans exclusively. Viewing these debates in terms of empathy has the potential to simplify the discussion surrounding them and to understand that the roots of each side's position lie in the shared goal to care for others.

In addition to offering insights to ideological conflict, the present research offers numerous avenues for future research. One possibility is to examine the exact features of the particular social groups that evoke empathy from liberals versus conservatives, respectively. Although we have characterized the nature of family, nation, and humans compared to friends, the world, and nonhumans as differing in terms of size, they differ on a number of factors that are correlated with size. For example, these "small" groups are less diverse, less permeable, and more clearly hierarchical. "Larger" groups are inherently more diverse, more permeable, and less hierarchical. Future research can determine the influence of each of these factors on how ideology guides people to empathize with distinct social circles. A second question for future research to examine is whether ideological preferences for smaller versus larger social circles applies to novel social circles. The present studies demonstrate ideological preferences for relatively known circles and show that, for example, empathy for a given circle might differ in terms of whether it is construed as small or large. Although Studies 2 and 3 show that conservatives express more love of and identification with the nation, in Studies 6 and 7, no specific correlation emerges between ideology and moral concern toward the nation.

This is likely because in Studies 6 and 7, nation is positioned amongst extremely small circles (e.g., one's immediate family) and extremely large circles (e.g., all existence). This result suggests that empathy toward any novel social circle that conservatives and liberals encounter will be determined by how or small they construe the circle to be. A third avenue for future research is to determine causality between ideology and empathy toward circles of different sizes. The present research is largely correlational in nature, but we suspect that ideology contributes to different expressions of empathy just as the experience of empathy toward social circles of different sizes can influence ideological positions as well. Finally, future investigations of partisan perceptions of empathy as zero-sum or non-zero-sum could lead to ideological bridge-building interventions; after all, liberal and conservative allocations of empathy are only at odds if there is a fixed amount of empathy to go around. We welcome future research on these questions, and for now provide a framework for reinterpreting the ideological divide through the lens of empathy, which differs not in absolute amount between liberals and conservatives, but in how it is distributed.

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Figure 1. Heatmaps indicating highest moral allocation for liberals and conservatives.
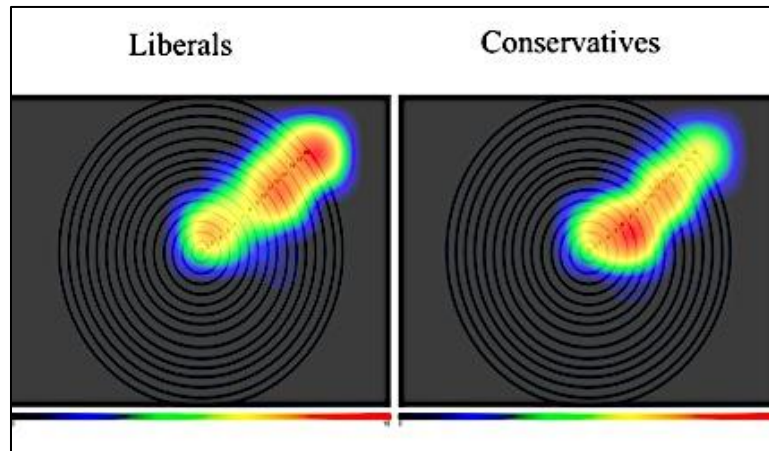
Note. The highest value on heatmap scale is 16 for liberals and 10 for conservatives. Moral circle rings, from inner to outer, are described as follows: all of your immediate family, all of your extended family, all of your closest friends, all of your friends (including distant ones), all of your acquaintances, all people you have ever met, all people in your country, all people on your continent, all people on all continents, all mammals, all amphibians, reptiles, mammals, fish, and birds, all animals on earth including paramecia and amoebae, all animals in the universe, including alien lifeforms, all living things in the universe including plants and trees, all natural things in the universe including inert entities such as rocks, all things in existence (see Appendix A).

Figure 2. Summary of findings.

	Family	Friends	Nation	World	Humans	Nonhumans
Empathic Concern	ns	L				
Love	C	L		L		
Identification			C	L		
Values			C	L		
Anthropomorphism					C	L
Moral distribution					C	L

Note: The left side of the chart indicates the type of measure assessed and the top of the chart indicates the particular circle assessed. "C" represents a significant correlation with conservatism whereas "L" indicates a significant correlation with liberalism (ns indicates no significant pattern).

Appendix A: Instructions for Circle Task

On this page, we would like you to indicate the extent of your moral circle. By moral circle, we mean the circle of people or other entities for which you are concerned about right and wrong done toward them. This depiction demonstrates that people have different types of moral circles. At the innermost circle, some people care about their immediately family only, and at the outermost circle, people care about the entire universe--all things in existence. Please use the following scale and select a location that depicts the extent of your moral circle.

1 - all of your immediate family
2 - all of your extended family
3 - all of your closest friends
4 - all of your friends (including distant ones)
5 - all of your acquaintances
6 - all people you have ever met
7 - all people in your country
8 - all people on your continent
9 - all people on all continents
10 - all mammals
11 - all amphibians, reptiles, mammals, fish, and birds
12 - all animals on earth including paramecia and amoebae
13 - all animals in the universe, including alien lifeforms
14 - all living things in the universe including plants and trees
15 - all natural things in the universe including inert entities such as rocks
16 - all things in existence

Please click on a number that depicts the extent of your moral circle. Note that in this scale, the number you select includes the numbers below it as well. So, if you select 10 (all mammals), you are also including numbers 1-9 (up to 'all people on all continents') in your moral circle.